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Veritas



Errata

"8th Special Forces Group" inset in "Building El Salvador's Airborne Part I," *Veritas* 4:1 (2008), 65. The officer-in-charge (OIC) of D Company, 7th SFG advance echelon (ADVON) sent to Panama in July 1962 was actually Captain Alvin H. Buckelew. CPT Richard F. Carvell became ill with *amoebic colitis* shortly after arriving in Panama. Carvell spent almost a month in Gorgas Hospital,

not Buckelew. The names were reversed in the original article. The two captains were coincidentally both 1st Airborne Ranger Company veterans of the Korean War.¹ CHB

Endnote

- ¹ Retired LTC Alvin H. Buckelew e-mail to Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 24 April 2008, Subject: error in Vol. 4, No. 1, 2008 *Veritas*, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.



*8th Special
Forces Group
Flash*

Areas of Operations Covered in this Veritas...





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Veritas

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Cover Photo: TF Raptor and
ODA 566 search for the downed
AH-64 Apache helicopter north
of An Najaf, 28 January 2007.



The Azimuth of the USASOC History Office



The purpose of the “Azimuth” is to provide the reader with a quarterly Situation Report (SITREP) on USASOC History Office projects, particularly in the long overdue publication of Army SOF history. That was not deemed important for more than sixty-five years by those serving from World II to the present. When these combat veterans retired and grew “long in the tooth,” it dawned on many of them that their contributions to military history (legacy and heritage) had not been well-documented.

That tremendous void is a “target rich environment” ...except like most military and Army SOF personnel, active and retired, historians capable and willing to diligently put pen to paper to write and illustrate well-documented, interesting, readable history on stringent deadlines are rare. No one has been beating down our office door with proposed articles or seeking employment as ARSOF history writers.

Some readers think the quarterly Army SOF history journal, *Veritas*, the books on Afghanistan (*Weapon of Choice*) and Iraq (*All Roads Lead to Baghdad*), the OSS exhibit in the Airborne Special Operations Museum downtown, memorialization, and the myriad of administrative tasks endemic to a USASOC staff element are done by a “small army of historians,” or as one local newspaper pundit wrote, “a ‘larded up’ history staff of retired special forces officers...” The only accurate word in those phrases is “small.” This is the **only** history office in the U.S. Army and Department of Defense that produces a quarterly history journal and writes well-documented books. The command’s history office had to be “certified” by the U.S. Army Center of Military History in May 2008.

Here’s the reality of those credits at bottom of this page. We have four fulltime (two permanently assigned, one overhire, and a U.S. Army historian one year at a time) historians and one contract historian. They are supported by a desk top publishing production staff of five (two overhires and three contractors). The availability of funds determines how long this “band aid” operation

holds together. This is significant progress because in July 2000, the one historian position at USASOC and one at the U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center & School, had been vacant for more than two years.

Command support grew significantly with the publication of *Weapon of Choice* in October 2003. *Veritas* (1st issue in Winter 2005) is the flagship publication of USASOC. The catalyst for this emphasis was 9/11 and retired General Bryan D. Brown and subsequent USASOC commanders. ARSOF’s predominant role early in the Afghanistan war provided an excellent opportunity to begin recording its rich history.

Today, four fulltime and one contract historian provide all historical support to the Army service component command of U.S. Special Operations Command, its two major subordinate commands, U.S. Army Special Forces Command and the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center & School, and six major subordinate units, the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, the 4th Psychological Operations Group, the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, and the Special Operations Sustainment Brigade). Army SOF units are based at seven separate continental United States and three overseas installations. All of these elements have units fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

That creates a “good news/bad news” story because the more that the five of us write, the more that is wanted, and we cannot work fast enough to fill the sixty-five year void to satisfy everyone. But, “one can eat an elephant...a bite at a time.” We take our mission seriously. Quality, accurate, interesting, and well-documented ARSOF history will not be sacrificed for quantity. Our constant challenge is balancing articles to cover the widest spectrum of Army SOF units and periods of conflict.

We appreciate the notes of support. Increased numbers of subscribers have driven our quarterly *Veritas* issues from 10,000 in 2005, to 14,000 copies today. Thanks. CHB

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Fighting Through the “Fog of War”

The Battle of An Najaf,
28-29 January 2007-Part I

by Charles H. Briscoe



ODA 563 and Iraqi Hilla SWAT police prepare to enter the contact area on 28 January 2007 during the two-day Battle of An Najaf.

In

**In keeping with USSOCOM Policy, Special Operations Soldiers Major and below in this article have been given pseudonyms.*

August 2006, Captain (CPT) Eldon Johnson* and Master Sergeant (MSG) Roger Ligon* returned to An Najaf, this time with ODA 566, 2nd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (2/5 SFG), during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM IV (OIF IV). The team's foreign internal defense (FID) mission in Ad Diwaniyah was expanded to include An Najaf when the SF team assigned to that Shia holy city was diverted to the Iraqi Army Counterinsurgency (COIN) School. Since two key leaders of ODA 566 knew the Iraqi military leadership in and around An Najaf from a previous tour, it was a logical FOB 52 (Field Operating Base = 2/5 SFG) realignment.¹

An Najaf, one of the holiest Shia Islam cities in Iraq, is the center of Shia political power. It is located about forty-five miles south southeast of Karbala and hundred miles directly south of Baghdad. The population has increased significantly since 2003 (585,600 people) with the influx of immigrants coming from abroad. As the city containing the tomb and shrine of Imam Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Mohammed, whom the Shia consider to be the righteous caliph and first imam, it attracts a tremendous number of Shiite Muslims from around the world every January before Ashura. Adjacent to the shrine of Imam Ali is possibly the largest Muslim cemetery in the world. Only Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia host larger Muslim pilgrimages.²



5th Special Forces Group Flash

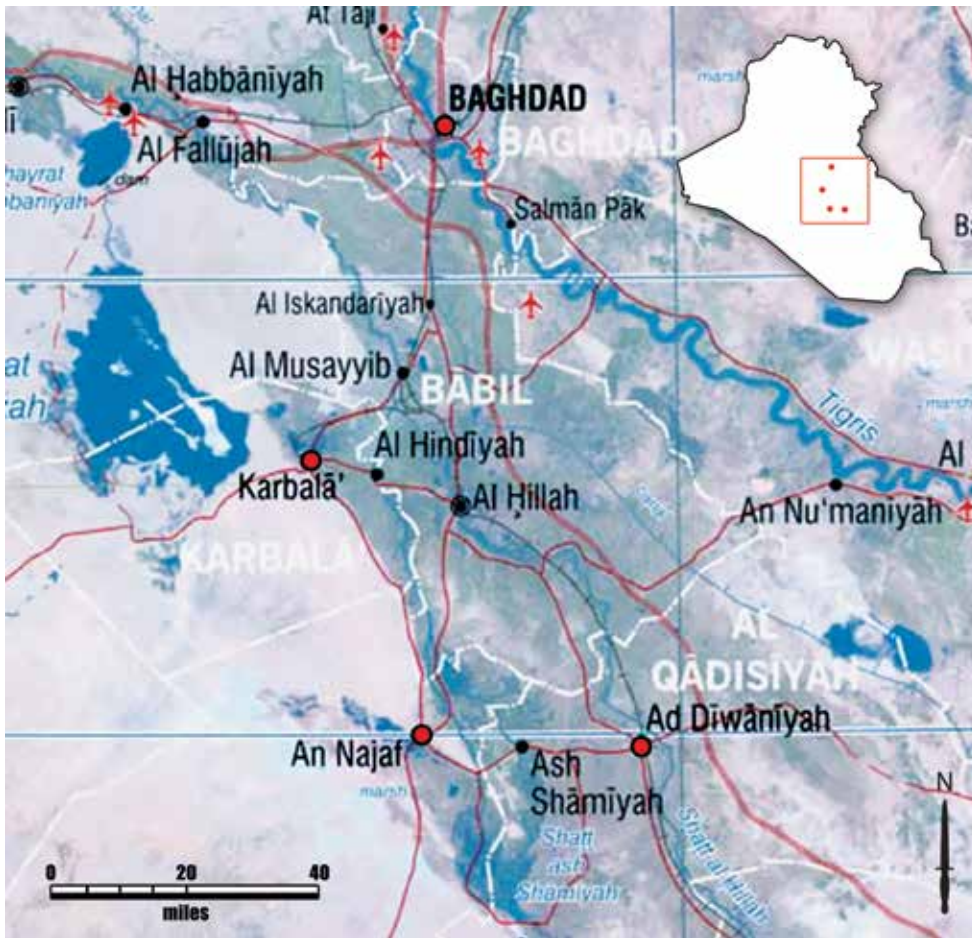
This two-part article explains the second Battle of An Najaf (the first was August 2004) and the roles and missions of three Army Special Forces elements and the very different Iraqi military and police forces that they train and with whom they regularly operate. The story has been divided into phases because a complicated situation kept escalating in intensity and it was too difficult to appreciate, understand, and digest in a single "bite." All SF units and command levels contributed to the success of the operation. The steady transition of operational control of Coalition areas of responsibility to Iraq has dramatically altered the combat environment. FID has become the primary Special Forces mission. The two-day battle reinforced the necessity for ballistic window glass, up-armored vehicles, body armor, and helmets. Conditions began to reverse dramatically in An Najaf and Ad Diwaniyah during the Christmas holidays of 2006.

In the first five months of OIF IV (August-December 2006) An Najaf had been calm; Ad Diwaniyah was the problem area for ODA 566. Although the 900-man Polish contingent of the Multi-National Force (MNF) led by a two-star general and the Iraqi Army 8th Division headquarters and one infantry battalion were located in Ad Diwaniyah, Iranian-supported JAM (*Jaysh al Mahdi*) army elements, nominally directed by Muqtada al-Sadr, controlled the city streets. Because there was a Multi-National presence in Ad Diwaniyah, CPT Johnson, with command approval, reestablished an American SF presence in An

Imam Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Mohammed, is considered by Shia Muslims to be the righteous caliph and first Imam. The mosque containing his tomb (map set) is located in the center of the old section of An Najaf.

Imam Ali





The location of the Iraqi cities mentioned in this article (Baghdad, Karbala, Al Hillah, An Najaf, and Ad Diwaniyah) are shown on the map.



Iraqi General Uthman, the 8th Division commander, had his headquarters in Ad Diwaniyah.

Najaf in August 2006, despite the inconvenience of having to arrange logistics support.³

Two days (27 August 2006) after their arrival in Iraq, General Uthman, the 8th Division commander in Ad Diwaniyah, called CPT

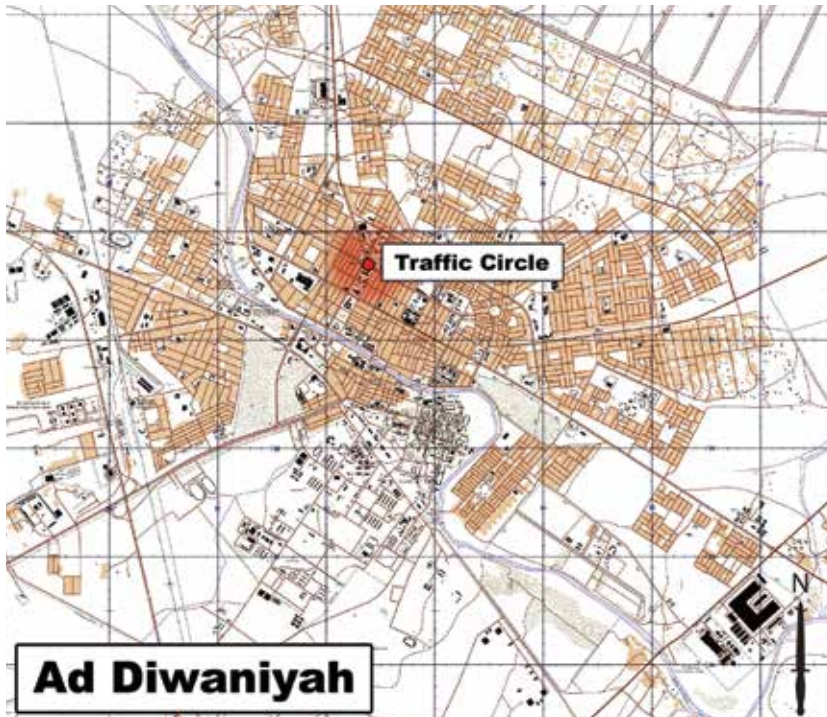
Johnson* for ODA 566's help. An Iraqi Army patrol had clashed with JAM militia. A serious fight was underway. The platoon was decisively engaged and had numerous casualties. The general would provide a company to assist if the SF team would help them extract the embattled Iraqi element. Several weeks before, an Iraqi platoon, after getting into a serious fight with the JAM, had exhausted their ammunition and surrendered before help could arrive. All thirteen Iraqi soldiers were executed.⁴ This engagement was an opportunity to reinforce General Uthman's confidence in CPT Johnson* and his SF team and an opportunity for the Americans to assess the combat skills of the Iraqis since their last rotation.⁵

"The action was good for the guys. It was important to

get it straight from the start," said MSG Ligon, the team sergeant. "The Poles did little patrolling in the city."⁶ ODA 566, "saddled up" in two up-armored Ground Mobility Vehicles (GMV), picked up another eleven Iraqi Army vehicles with troops at the 8th Division compound (the promised company) and proceeded into the contact zone. About 200 meters short of crossing the main highway bridge into the city, the American and Iraqi Army relief force was engaged from their right by twenty-five JAM insurgents firing AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) from a three-story building called the 'Tire Factory.' Heavy crew-served weapons fire from the GMVs suppressed the enemy fire and the JAM broke contact. Then, a second group of enemy fighters hidden in houses and alleys on the left fired on the convoy. When we returned fire, they consolidated in one structure."⁷ It was time to drive the JAM away.

The Air Force JTAC (Joint Tactical Air Controller) with ODA 566, Staff Sergeant (SSgt) Michael Stone*, had close air support (CAS) standing by. A well-directed 500 lb. Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) was dropped on the building, completely destroying it and the 20-25 JAM inside. That eliminated the enemy resistance and fire became sporadic as the relief convoy resumed movement into the city.⁸

After the airstrike the Iraqi relief force cleared buildings on each side of the street as the convoy moved towards the heart of the city, the main traffic circle. Three hours and one well-placed JDAM later, the combined element made contact with the beleaguered Iraqi platoon. The SF soldiers positioned their "thorn trucks" (al-Qaeda/Taliban parlance for SF GMVs having multiple pedestal-mounted crew-served weapons was brought by foreign fighters to Iraq) between the JAM militia and Iraqi element. The relief force would not conduct any ground assaults. As ODA 566 provided covering fire, the Iraqi troops collected their wounded and the seven dead, loading everyone aboard vehicles. As they withdrew, the Special Forces team covered the Iraqis from bounding overwatch positions.⁹ "It was a hairy, urban combat operation, but it 'got everyone's [[ODA 566]] head into the game' at the beginning of OIF IV and set the tone for the rotation," said CPT Johnson*.¹⁰ The JAM dominance of Ad Diwaniyah became such a problem



The highlighted traffic circle on the city map of Ad Diwaniyah was where ODA 566 rescued the beleaguered Iraqi platoon in August 2006.

that the U.S. 4th Infantry Division (4th ID) decided to clear the city in early October 2006.

That proved easier said than done, even with an armor battalion task force. "The 4th ID task force assembled at Camp Echo and spent several days preparing for the mission. This gave the JAM plenty of time to get ready and relocate supplies before the tankers came. After having their PSYOP loudspeaker teams [with MP (military police) protection] driven off, they lost two M-1 Abrams tanks and two M-2/3 Bradley armored fighting vehicles to RPGs and IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices). The armored task force withdrew after two days," said Staff Sergeant (SSG) Allen Lawrence.*¹¹ An approaching rotation date had some bearing on the decision. It was a real mess



US Navy F/A-18 Hornet fighter aircraft.

when ODA 566 conducted a presence patrol in Ad Diwaniyah on 9 October 2006, while the 4th ID was still in country.¹²

CPT Johnson wanted to make a late afternoon foray into downtown Ad Diwaniyah to show SF resolve to the JAM. They were going to visit a joint Army/Police checkpoint (CP) on the traffic circle where two days before an Iraqi police lieutenant had been executed. An Iraqi reconnaissance patrol had been detained by JAM for several hours the following day. ODA 566 led the presence patrol in their three GMVs with a platoon of 8th Iraqi Division Scouts from An Najaf in three brand-new up-armored

HMMWVs fixed with PKM 7.62mm machineguns. "The Scouts were really proud of those trucks. While we halted near a mosque, Iraqi Police, anticipating a fight, began cordoning off the area. Shortly after the Scouts 'fired up' a car that would not stop for the police, the first hand grenades were thrown. RPGs followed and our combined presence patrol was soon fighting more than fifty JAM militiamen. They hit us with light machineguns, AK assault rifles, hand grenades, and RPGs. Two hand grenades bounced off the truck before exploding and the fuses fell out of the other two," remembered SFC Jack Carter.*¹³

"The JAM managed to hit our GMVs with nine RPGs," said SSG Lawrence, the junior 18D (SF medic) driving the lead GMV with CPT Johnson. "When the RPGs hit, they rocked the truck. It felt like someone hitting us with a sledgehammer. Fortunately, they were firing them so close that the RPGs didn't have time to arm. The rockets cracked our ballistic windshield and windows and careened off hoods and truck tops. Bullet holes and RPG scars and burn marks were pretty normal. When we took a direct hit on the right windshield, the impact threw me against the door and bounced my head off the side window. The flash 'whited out' my NVGs and smoke was filling the cab. CPT Johnson immediately yelled, 'Everybody on the truck! Back up! Stop!' in such quick succession that when I hit the brakes on the third order, the GIB (guy in back) with the M240 and Nelson*, our 'terp' (interpreter) were tossed out of the back into a fruit stand on the side of the street. It would have been comical if it hadn't been so serious."¹⁴ With the gunfight still raging after thirty minutes CPT Johnson called in CAS.



The 7.62mm PKM light machinegun and a rocket-propelled anti-tank grenade (RPG), with its launcher.



LtoR: Pilgrims fill the plaza surrounding the Imam Ali mosque during Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram; Especially devout Shia Muslims flog themselves to atone for the murder of Hussein, grandson of the prophet Mohammed, that created the schism between Shia and Sunni; All the streets in An Najaf leading to the Imam Ali mosque were filled to overflowing with pilgrims during Ashura.

Instead of delivering ordnance near the crowded city center, the two Navy A/F-18 Hornet fighters loitering overhead, did a flyover “on the deck.” That was sufficient to make the JAM break contact. “With one GMV damaged we executed a ‘worm’ turn and got out of there. We were shooting out street lights as we left. The Air Force Tactical Air Control Party (TACP), in our last vehicle, got the F-18s to provide us ‘top cover’ as we withdrew from the city,” recalled SFC Seth Roberts,* the senior medic.¹⁵ Four of the armor-wearing American SF received minor wounds from spalling RPGs and small arms fire.

ODA 566 had made it clear that unlike the Poles, the Special Forces would enter Ad Diwaniyah at will. They towed SSG Lawrence’s truck back to Camp Echo, Diwaniyah.¹⁶ After having to regularly mix it up with the JAM, it was a relief to perform FID missions in An Najaf, at least until Christmas Eve 2006. Retaliation for capturing the primary lawyer of Muqtada al Sadr was the emplacement of a large EFP (Explosively Fired Projectile) against the team house at Camp David. Fortunately, the bomb was discovered and disabled, but it demonstrated how relatively unstable it was in An Najaf.¹⁷

Pilgrims to An Najaf prior to the Day of Ashura (29

January 2007) swelled the city population from 600,000 to several million in January, daily closing three lanes of traffic on major four-lane divided highways in the city. Especially devout Shia Muslims were prone to flog themselves with “cat-o-nine tails” during parades on Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram. This was done to atone for the murder of Hussein, grandson of the prophet Mohammed, which historically created the schism between Shia and Sunni Muslims. The voluminous pilgrimage and sanctity accorded by the religious holiday provided natural cover for militant meetings as well a venue to recruit Jihad fighters.¹⁸

ODA 566 & TF Raptor

ODA 566 was actively patrolling and monitoring the situation when CJSOTF sent Task Force Raptor [ODB 510 headquarters (-), ODA 512, and an Iraqi assault company to deal with several high value targets (HVTs) expected to meet in An Najaf under the auspices of attending a funeral. After several “spin ups” (“stand by to execute”) in the first thirty-six hours, MAJ Jack Guardino*, the Raptor commander sent part of his force (the Commando company mounted in M1126 Stryker LAV IIIs (light armored vehicle)



ODA 512 (TF Raptor) GMV with its 7.62 mini-gun.



Iraqi “Raptor” Patch



American SF soldier with Iraqi Raptor assaulters.

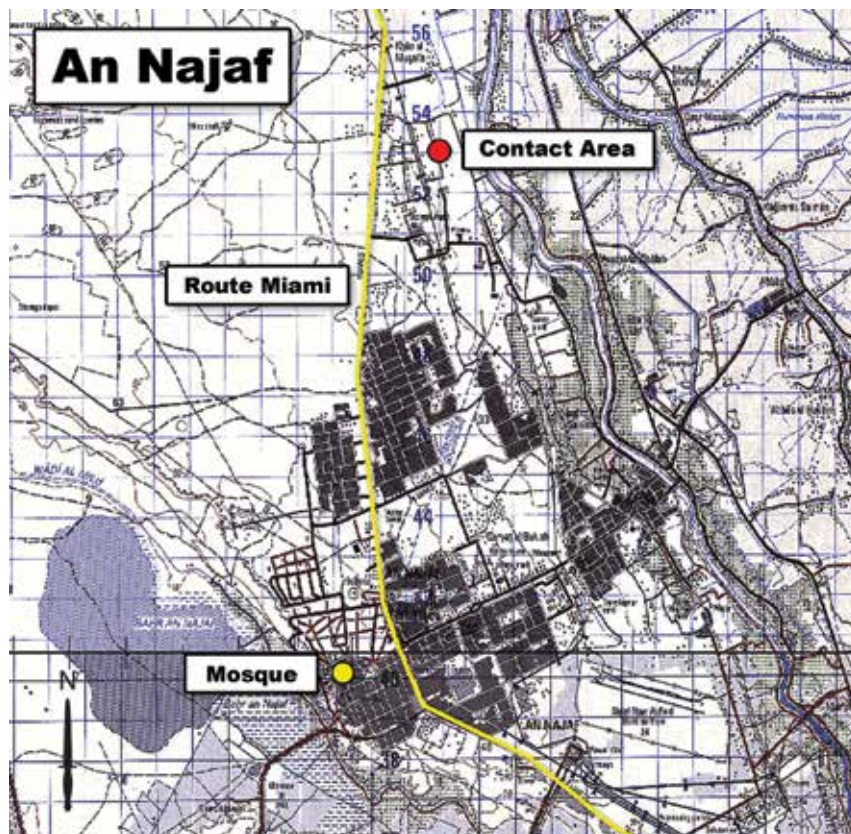
and LAV-25 Pandurs) back to base in Baghdad using Route Tampa. An Najaf was not going to be lucrative; the intelligence was good, but the potential HVTs had immersed themselves among very large groups, making it impossible to capture them by direct action. The CJSOTF agreed with Guardino's assessment and supported bringing the rest of his element home on 28 January 2007. In the small Camp David, ODA 566 had hosted TF Raptor for three days while both elements intensely mission planned.¹⁹ Thus, the two forces were pretty much exhausted when CPT Johnson received two calls for help from the Iraqis about 7 A.M., 28 January 2007.

"SGT Ali, the 1st Scout Reconnaissance Platoon sergeant with whom we had worked in Diwaniyah in October, reported that they were in heavy contact in the northeastern outskirts of An Najaf, had numerous casualties, and needed help. This was almost immediately followed by another cell phone call from Governor Abu Galel, the elected provincial governor, requesting U.S. air and ground support. I told MSG Ligon to get the guys on the trucks while I got clearance from the FOB. Remember, the Iraqi Provisional Government assumed control of the province and General Uthman, 8th Iraqi Army Division commander, took responsibility for the battle space (Karbala to Al Kut to An Najaf) in September 2006. MAJ Guardino volunteered to reinforce us with Raptor in the event JAM was involved," said CPT Johnson. "And then, we moved out in the direction of the reported fighting."²⁰

"That was not easy. Ashura was in full swing. The entire four-lane roadway with its tree-lined median [An Najaf-Karbala highway (Route Miami on the west side of the objective area)] was jammed with pilgrims walking, riding in cars, trucks, bicycles...you name it. I was honking my horn and physically pushing a path through the mass of people and vehicles with my GMV. It was slow going until we got around the 20th Revolution Circle," said SSG Lawrence, driver of the first ODA 566 GMV.²¹ It was just as bad when the Raptor convoy of eight vehicles bulled its way onto the highway ten minutes later.

ODA 566 & TF Raptor Help the Iraqis Break Contact

CPT Johnson (ODA 566) reported: "As we neared the contact area, I heard gunfire and flagged down two Iraqi 'bongo' trucks (five-ton commercial vehicles) coming towards us with wounded aboard. After our medics checked them out, we loaded everyone on one vehicle and got Heider, one of the better Scouts, to lead us into the contact area. In the midst of dazed Iraqi officials and police was a highly agitated COL Saadi Al-Maliki, the 1st Brigade, 8th



Map of An Najaf showing the relationship of the Imam Ali mosque and Route Miami (Karbala/An Najaf highway) to the initial contact site.

IA Division commander. MSG Ligon positioned our two GMVs between the Iraqi group and a berm, aligning them side-by-side, but at an angle to maximize the firepower of our .50 cal, M-240, and M-249 machineguns. COL Saadi estimated that there were 1,000 enemy fighters. I thought that it was probably a hundred based on experience. Regardless of numbers, different groups of about 15-20 shooters, delivering well-aimed small arms fire, had 15 Iraqi Scouts pinned down. These fighters would pop up on the berm ridge, each firing a few shots, then drop back down, and reappear at a different position to fire again. As I tried to figure out what was going on, the GMV gunners began engaging targets."²²

During a hail of gunfire that wounded MSG Ligon and SSG Geoffrey Kendrick, the lead GMV driver, and smashed into the ballistic shield of SFC Roberts' M-240, the three abandoned the idling "RPG magnet" to lay down a base of fire from a more covered position. MSG Ligon with his M-203 grenade launcher, SFC Roberts with two M-72 LAWs (Light Antitank Weapon), and SSG Kendrick with an M-79 grenade launcher and a bag of 40mm rounds occupied a small ditch near a concrete structure. From there they covered the Scout withdrawal by fire.²³ Rocket-propelled grenades kept slamming into the armored GMVs, cracking windows and splattering everyone with shrapnel as armor-piercing small arms rounds punched holes through bodies and doors. "That's when the reinforcements (TF Raptor in seven GMVs and their 5-ton wrecker) joined us on the battle site," said CPT Johnson.²⁴

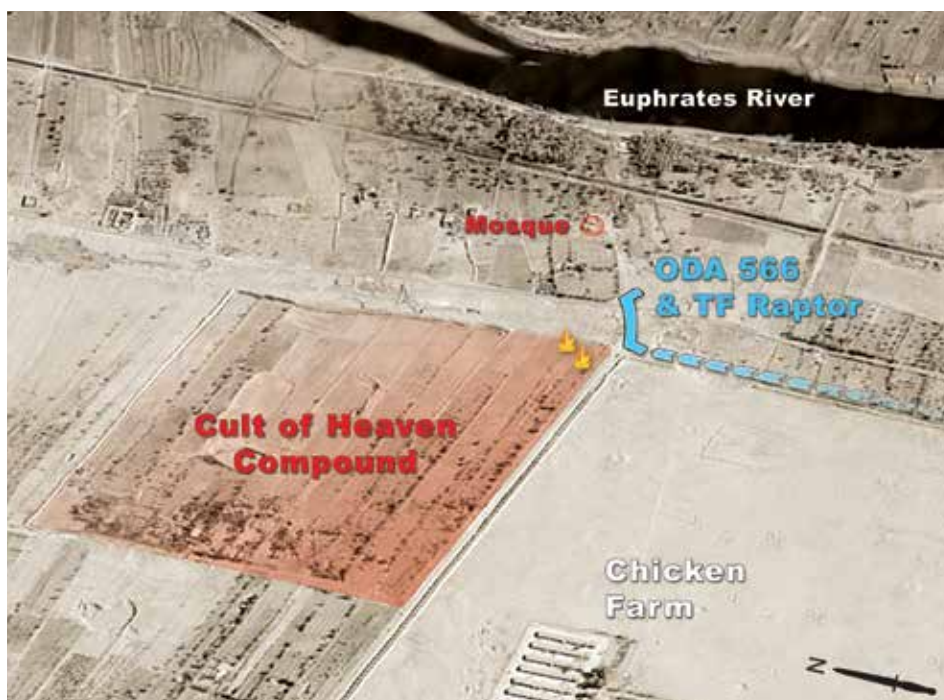


Artist rendition of the 28 January 2007 vehicle-supported assault by ODA 566 and TF Raptor to drive the enemy back from the compound berm allowing trapped Iraqi government officials, police, and Army Scouts to reach safety.

MSG Sam Kavanaugh,* team sergeant for ODA 513, quickly moved his two 7.62mm mini-gun trucks to the left and right of the ODA 566 vehicles. Then, he began spreading out his team and the Iraqi assaulters to reinforce the defensive line and cover the flanks. A small village and cemetery was on the west side and enemy fighters were running around in a palm grove that extended to the Euphrates River on the east.²⁵ Small arms fire was kicking up dust all around him when two RPGs ricocheted off the ground on either side “bracketing” him. Undaunted by the heavy enemy fire and shrapnel, MSG Kavanaugh positioned his personnel to join ODA 566 in a limited, vehicle-supported ground assault to permit the trapped Iraqi Scouts, police, and officials to reach friendly lines. Kavanaugh admitted, “I did get quite a few holes in my body armor pouches and pants leg pocket. My radio was grazed by fire. Shrapnel took a small chunk out of my right forearm.”²⁶ In the meantime MAJ Guardino, the senior American SF commander, was focused on arranging CAS. He had his junior JTAC, Technical Sergeant (TSgt) Dale Osborne*

working directly with SSGT Nate Andrews,* the TACP located in the Ops Cen of ODA 566 in Camp David.

While MAJ Guardino was waiting for CAS, an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) appeared overhead indicating that a higher headquarters was monitoring the situation. Unfortunately for the SF on the ground, they received no reports about what was on the other



Section of imagery map showing Phase One with element locations, entry route, and key terrain/sites highlighted.

side of the berm to clear some of “the fog of war” from the situation. Its presence blocked the employment of CAS. Broken, disjointed radio communications, though patched together by relays, plagued Special Forces elements throughout the fight.²⁷ In the meantime, CPT Johnson, the local SF commander, was trying to sort out the situation in his area of responsibility with COL Saadi.²⁸

It quickly became obvious to the ODA 566 commander that this was a politically-driven, “Iraqi only” operation that had gone bad. Details would be unknown for some time. These situations were inevitable since control of Najaf province had transitioned to the Iraqi government in January 2007. American Special Forces were expected to help the Iraqi Army and government officials maintain the peace after the transition.²⁹

It was later discovered that the Deputy Provincial Governor had led an official entourage consisting of the Minister of the Interior, the chief of police, and other government staff into the 1500m by 1500m compound at first light to arrest the leaders. The party was escorted by six Scouts in two HMMWVs. While the fifty person negotiating element politely waited with warrants for the leaders, they were attacked with a PKM 7.62 machinegun. Two of the Scouts facing away were killed instantly and the other four wounded. The Iraqi police chief was wounded seriously in this initial volley of well-directed fire. When the volume of fire grew intense, injured Scouts, police, and the Iraqi officials abandoned their vehicles (seven or eight SUVs and the two HMMWVs) and fled the compound in a hail of gunfire.³⁰

The only part that was clear at 1100 hours, 28 January 2007, was that COL Saadi was in charge of the cordon force around the compound. This force of Iraqi policemen, most of whom had only sidearms, and two Army Scout platoons, numbered 150 men. Fortunately, the Scouts, armed with AK-47s and PKM light machineguns, had received marksmanship and basic soldier skills training and direct action urban and dismounted infantry tactics from ODA 566. What had provoked the firefight was undetermined. What was certain was that Iraqi government officials had “poked a stick into a hornets’ nest” and were unprepared for the consequences. How big that hornets’ nest was, remained to be seen.³¹



Iraqi Colonel Saadi Al-Maliki, 1/8th Brigade commander, was in charge of the cordon force surrounding the enemy compound.

“Those guys were well-trained. They did bounding overwatch from position to position, moved between positions, and then regrouped before massing their fires. They took deliberate aim before firing. They were good shooters with small arms, machineguns, and RPGs and kept engaging. They were staying to fight. Their proficiency prompted me to push guys out to cover our flanks as I tried to spot the mortars” said CPT Gordon Muldoon* [(ODA 512) TF Raptor].³²

In addition to small arms, RPGs, and machineguns, 60mm mortars were used against the American-led relief forces. The volume of enemy fire and variety of weapons was too heavy to use sniper rifles effectively against the “poppers” on the berm.³³ “I set up a sniper position in a ditch on the far side of the road fifty meters in front of the trucks. After firing twenty-seven or twenty-eight rounds they drove me off with a well-aimed RPG. The rocket hit so close that spalling showered me,” said SFC James Carter,* the intelligence sergeant for ODA 566. “Since I was ‘pegged,’ I scooted over to another covered position.”³⁴

The SF teams and Raptor assaulters responded in kind and MAJ Guardino “upped the ante” with CAS—two F-16 Falcon fighters and two A-10 “Wart Hog” fighter bombers strafed the compound with 20mm and 30mm cannon fire respectively before dropping their 500-pound bombs.³⁵ Enemy fire dwindled during the air attacks. MAJ Guardino and CPT Johnson combined their forces to mount a heavy weapons-supported ground assault with soldiers walking and firing between the slow moving trucks to the base of the berm. “At the start of the assault I hurriedly brought a twin M-240 and a .50 cal truck up to the assault line. Since our vehicles were fifty to a hundred meters apart and our internal communications



An F-16 Fighting Falcon fighter, carrying extra fuel tanks, takes off with full load of ordnance.



The A-10 "Wart Hog" fighter-bomber was designed to provide close support to ground troops.



TF Raptor assaulters take control of fleeing Iraqi police, Scouts, and government officials to effect a safe passage of lines.

were not working well, I did a lot of running back and forth to keep the assault line intact and our flanks covered," said MSG Kavanaugh.³⁶

"In the middle of the assault with bullets and RPGs flying all around, SSG Steve Black*, the Raptor mobility NCO, jumped into the back of the trucks, pulled mini-guns apart, adjusted headspace and timing, and reloaded them. He was oblivious to the danger; he was that focused," said CPT Muldoon. "During the ground attack, shooting from two to three hundred meters away, they had us 'tap dancing like little girls' as bullets kicked up dust between four of us," chuckled the 6'3" former West Point football player.³⁷ The RPG fire was so accurate that

CPT Johnson's GMV was stopped "dead" in the assault when a ricocheting rocket propelled grenade slammed under the truck cutting the hydraulic lines.³⁸

SGM William Nathan* brought the Raptor 5-ton wrecker forward to drag the disabled truck from the assault line. Close air support, AT-4s and LAWs, and the rolling vehicle-supported ground assault forced the enemy fighters off the berm ridge long enough to allow the politicians, police, and Scouts to begin abandoning cover and run to the safety of the American-led relief forces. When COL Saadi gave permission to eliminate snipers in a rudimentary mosque using CAS, trapped Iraqis began to flood towards ODA 566 and TF Raptor. "That slowed down the fight sufficiently for the Iraqi police and Scouts to pull out. We were already redistributing our ammo reserves," said MSG Ligon.³⁹

The number of fleeing Iraqis, wearing a variety of dress and carrying arms, quickly grew to more than fifty. Since they could not be readily identified, the TF Raptor assaulters, concerned about bomb-wearing infiltrators, went into action. They seized weapons, searched, separated, and got everyone down in the prone. Those rescued accepted the no-nonsense, professional treatment as the price for their salvation. When COL Saadi and the Province Security Chief, General Qais, vouched for them, a few were permitted to get up and identify other friendlies.⁴⁰

Once the safe passage of lines had been completed and the wounded (eight Scouts and several policemen) given first aid, ODA 566 had fulfilled its obligation to General Uthman, the 8th IA Division commander. They had accomplished the relief/rescue mission without becoming decisively engaged. American CAS made the difference. BG Qais, the provincial security chief, and COL Saadi assured CPT Johnson and MAJ Guardino that they could handle the situation; CAS had "eliminated" the enemy resistance.⁴¹

MAJ Walt Brockman*, the ODB 560 commander in Hilla, was monitoring the situation. Feeling pressure from the aggressive COL Abbas, the former deputy province police chief and current Hilla SWAT commander, who planned to take a company to An Najaf, he dispatched ODA 563 from Firebase Stack. They would accompany

TF Raptor and ODA 566 assemble on Route Miami to return to Camp David after helping Iraqi police and military break contact in the late morning (28 January 2007). The TF Raptor wrecker is towing a battle-damaged 566 GMV.





A Hilla SWAT policeman mans a truck-mounted PKM light machinegun.



Iraqi Colonel Abbas, the current commander of the Hilla SWAT (right side center), often rode in the bed of the ODA 563 "War Pig," an armored 5-ton truck with three M-240 machineguns.

the SWAT to reinforce ODA 566. COL Abbas regularly employed Hilla SWAT, a Ministry of the Interior asset, outside the province when he thought "the missions were good for Iraq." ODA 563 and the SWAT company had been recovering after a frustrating night raid.⁴²

Enter ODA 563 & Hilla SWAT

Feelings on the young SF team ran high. "I figured that all we were going to do was 'baby sit' the Iraqis or clean up another of their messes again," said SSG Daniel Malcolm*, the junior communications sergeant. "Truck driving and crew-served weapon duty was akin to 'sitting on the bench' while the 'varsity' did ground assaults with the SWAT. Those guys, positioned to support, usually just guarded the trucks," commented SSG Jesse Bartram*, the junior weapons sergeant. "Little did we know."⁴³

Knowing that ODA 563 was enroute, CPT Johnson got into his other GMV (his truck was being towed by the TF Raptor wrecker) to lead the two elements back to Camp David to refit and rearm. The two elements missed ODA 563 and Hilla SWAT by five or ten minutes because that element made its approach along a different route. Unaware that two AH-64 Apache attack helicopters had flown to the contact site, they did not realize that the fight was far from over.⁴⁴



The Hilla SWAT traveled in Chevrolet Crew Cab 4x4, pickup trucks with pedestal-mounted PKM light machineguns.



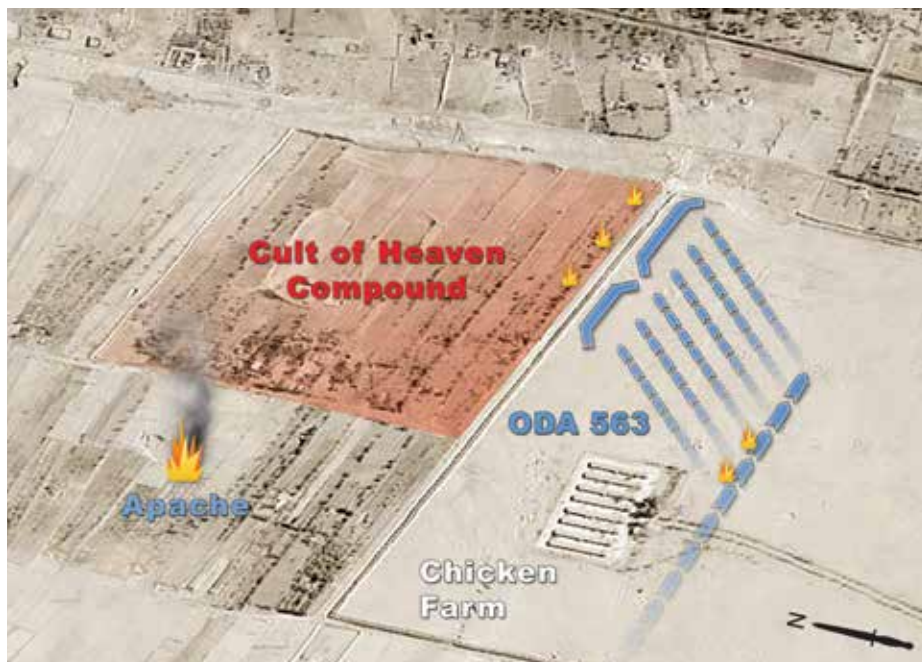
Hilla SWAT Patch

As soon as the combined force closed on Camp David, immediate refitting, rearming, and weapons maintenance per combat SOPs took precedence. Weapon systems were stripped off the disabled ODA 566 GMV and remounted on the third truck. Crew-served weapon and individual ammunition was replenished and extra boxes loaded aboard the "thorn trucks." The TF Raptor soldiers were scrambling to do the same thing. Fuel was "topped off," oil and fluid levels were checked, and ammunition loaded as all vehicles were made "fully combat ready" again.⁴⁵ CPT Johnson felt pride and satisfaction as he watched the beehive of activity orchestrated by the SF team sergeants. "These guys are really pros," he thought as he entered the Operations Center (Op Cen).⁴⁶

CSAR Mission - ODA 566 & TF Raptor

It was when entering the OpCen CPT Johnson first heard that an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter (BIG GUN 72) had been shot down at the contact site. His Air Force TACP, SSGT Andrews, who had been "stacking up" CAS sorties during the last action, alerted him. "I told MSG Ligon what had happened and said, 'Get the team 'kitted up' and ready to go.' This was about 1345 hours, local time. Then, I called the AOB to get a 'Big Army' mech (mechanized) task force to support and followed that with an email. MAJ Guardino and his sergeant major, who had come to the Ops Cen to say, 'Thanks for all the support,' before leaving for Baghdad, cancelled their plans when they heard about the Apache shootdown. We were both given the CSAR (combat search and rescue) mission. Based on grid coordinates for the AH-64 crash site and being told, 'Go towards the rising smoke,' MAJ Guardino and I came up with a hasty plan on his truck hood. We would approach from the north with Raptor leading," said Johnson. "My two wounded guys were already on their trucks ready to roll."⁴⁷

However, pinpointing the downed Apache gave the two SF elements a real appreciation of how well-trained and equipped those enemy fighters behind the eight to twelve-foot high berm were because the TF Raptor-ODA



Section of imagery map showing Phase Two depicts ODA 563 and Hilla SWAT doing a vehicle half-left echelon assault on enemy forces firing from the compound berm.



An AH-64 Apache attack helicopter.

566 convoy was taken under fire shortly after leaving Route Miami. Despite the area being fairly open, it was a labyrinth of walled fields and narrow roads with small palm groves interspersed. The maze proved tough to navigate. Walls were just high enough to block clear vision. The logical decision to approach from the north was based on the map coordinates, but unfortunately,

it was diametrically opposite of the routes used by the two SF elements earlier in the morning and there were several smoke columns (caused by the CAS) to add to the confusion.⁴⁸

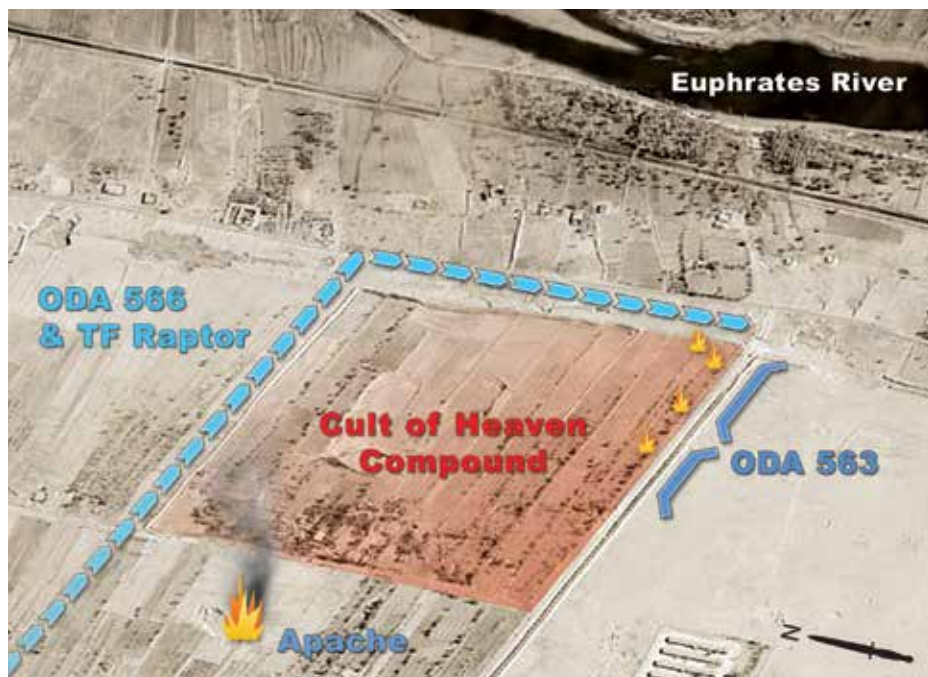
Shortly after entering the maze the nine vehicle convoy began receiving heavy enemy small arms fire. While moving under fire, MAJ Guardino, an old college baseball catcher, reached down and single-handedly snatched up an Iraqi assaulter, who had fallen from the vehicle ahead after being shot in the head. He pulled the wounded soldier into his moving truck one-handed. SFC Carter, the GIB on CPT Johnson's vehicle was hit in the shoulder with a 7.62 mm bullet during the approach. That was how accurate the enemy fire was as the nine trucks crept towards the compound corner where TF Raptor had positioned its mini-gun trucks

earlier. CPT Muldoon in the lead Raptor vehicle (ODA 512) spotted two SF soldiers beside an Iraqi officer as the convoy approached the corner. Unsure of their identity, he dismounted to ask if they knew where the downed Apache was.⁴⁹

CPT Johnson (ODA 566) at the end of the nine vehicle convoy knew the two SF were from ODA 563 because he had radio communications with their team sergeant. They had been sent to reinforce ODA 566 and were accompanied by a company of Hilla SWAT. The convoy stopped when CPT Muldoon got out. Johnson's crew swung to cover the left flank where the Euphrates River was in the distance. TF Raptor, supported by ODB 560 for the assigned HVT mission in An Najaf, were "geared up" for the trip back to Baghdad. They rarely monitored the local ODB frequencies and were unfamiliar with the capabilities of provincial Iraqi police and special military forces like Hilla SWAT and the Scouts. These factors added to the "fog of war" as the fighting escalated. Since both elements had been given the follow-on downed helicopter CSAR tasking, MAJ Guardino took charge as

Artist's rendition of ODA 563 and the Hilla SWAT half-left echelon assault on the enemy forces.





Section of imagery map showing Phase Three has the route of TF Raptor & ODA 566 as they search for the downed AH-64 helicopter and the positions of ODA 563 & Hilla SWAT.



A farm trailer-mounted 12.7mm DShK heavy machinegun in the Cult of Heaven compound. It was hooked up to a tractor.

ODA 563 & Hilla SWAT Make Contact

the senior commander.⁵⁰

ODA 563, leading the Hilla SWAT company with a GMV, left Route Miami to approach the contact site from the west. The team "War Pig," an armored 5-ton truck with a ring-mounted M-240 machinegun in front and two pedestal-mounted side M-240s, was moving in the middle of the eighteen SWAT trucks. They first encountered a large chicken farm which was checked. TF Raptor had done the same thing in the morning. After clearing the farm the Hilla force resumed their

eastward move.

When they entered a large semi-open area the convoy was hit by heavy flanking fire as the lead elements of the convoy came abreast the base of the walled compound. The SWAT in unarmored Chevrolet crew cab 4X4 pick-up trucks with pedestal-mounted PKM machineguns, emulated the action of the ODA 563 GMV when it executed a half echelon left assault to best counter the enemy ambush. "It was like a modern day Western movie," said SSG Malcolm. "In reality, it was divine intervention that caused the SWAT guys to do it." The "cavalry-style" gun-truck assault was ended abruptly by a large berm bordering the road. The SWAT provided some suppressive fire initially, but that ended quickly when the volume of fire from the berm ridge increased.

The SF soldiers in the "War Pig" of ODA 563 and most of the Hilla SWAT, separated from CPT Konrad in the GMV, quickly became decisively engaged at the berm. The lightly-armed police, having received little infantry tactical training, were not prepared to fire and maneuver to break up the situation when it became more complicated.⁵¹

"We had just cleared a chicken farm and were assaulting to the north in our trucks when I spotted two Apaches at 200/300 feet a half mile to the northeast doing 'Figure 8' gun runs. The two helicopters were taking RPG and heavy machinegun fire from the target. I watched an RPG airburst near them, and then, one helicopter was hit. The rotor blades stopped and it fell straight down." This was the collective memory of the AH-64 shootdown by MSG Shamus Flanagan* and SSGs Daniel Malcolm* and Jesse Bartram.⁵² At the opposite end of the SWAT line, SSG Jesse Bartram* on the GMV was engaging a DShK with his .50 cal machinegun.⁵³

The Special Forces soldiers with MSG Flanagan tried to use heavier weapons to reduce the enemy fire. "SFC Edward Gross*, a side M-240 gunner from the 'War Pig,' grabbed an M3 84mm Carl-Gustav antitank weapon and crawled up the berm. Just as he got ready to fire the recoilless rocket grenade into the compound from the top of the berm, a sniper took him out. The shot that struck his 'MICH' (Modular Integrated Communications Helmet pronounced 'mitch') knocked Gross back. Unconscious, he slid face down the berm. The MICH had saved him. SFC Peter Stoneman*, the senior medic, treated and bandaged the scalp wound and sent Gross to recover in the 'War Pig,' said MSG Flanagan.⁵⁴



Outside & inside views of 7.62mm impacts on "MICH" helmets worn by ODA 563 soldiers. Both men survived with minor concussions.

Artist rendition of a Cult of Heaven sniper knocking out an ODA 563 soldier attempting to engage with an M3 Carl-Gustav anti-tank recoilless rifle.

SSG Malcolm knew how close the enemy fighters were, having crested the berm several times. "I actually saw their faces. They were aiming and firing semi-automatic. It was accurate fire. They weren't typical 'spray and pray' guys.' Dirt was flying up all around us."⁵⁵ "But, not having seen what happened to SFC Gross, Malcolm, the other 'Pig' side gunner, picked up the Carl-Gustav dropped by him to do a repeat maneuver. He suffered the same consequences. That sniper was good," said Flanagan, the ODA 563 team sergeant.⁵⁶

Malcolm regained consciousness with a bandage around his head and an Iraqi SWAT policeman who had treated him, proudly shouting, "OK, mistuh! OK mistuh!" ("You'll be all right now"). "I felt like I had been smacked in the head with a baseball bat. Everything went black as I flopped face down and slipped down the berm. It was like watching fuzzy TV as I came to with this Iraqi trying to wipe the dirt off my face with a rag. My head hurt a lot."⁵⁷

MSG Flanagan said that "while the score was MICH: 2, Bad guys: 0, we were down to eight effectives on the team. We all tried to make light of the injuries to keep the Iraqis from freaking out. I hurriedly spread the remainder of my guys among the Iraqi SWAT manning frontal and flank security positions to keep them with us and moved the 'Pig' closer."⁵⁸

Meanwhile, CPT Robert Konrad*, the ODA 563 commander, had been conducting a reconnaissance of the open area on the far right flank (*Note: This was well forward of the original ODA 566 morning position) with SSG Cliff Bronson*, the junior medic. Bronson was trying to eliminate that truck-mounted DShK in the right corner of the compound with an M-79 40mm grenade launcher and Carl-Gustav antitank rockets. When that proved unsuccessful, CPT Konrad, SSG Bronson, SSGT Robert Macgregor*, the JTAC, COL Abbas, CPT Ali, the SWAT company commander, and several of his policemen made a dismounted flank assault against the southeastern side of the compound.⁵⁹

CPT Konrad, SSG Bronson, SSG Macgregor, COL



Proof of the effectiveness of ballistic glass mounted on the sides of the TF Raptor GMV cargo areas.



CPT Konrad (center) and Iraqi COL Abbas (right) standing on the berm near the CAS-destroyed truck-mounted DShK heavy machinegun. To their rear is SSGT Macgregor*, the JTAC for ODA 563.*

Abbas, and some SWAT police managed to crest the berm on the southeast side of the compound. From there they saw 75-100 enemy fighters manning interior trenches with other secondary defensive berms behind them. SSG Bartram, the GMV .50 cal machine gunner, the driver, SSG Kennan, with his truck idling, and SSG Carl Apo*, on the "War Pig" frontal M-240 covered this maneuver. The three Americans and the SWAT police

engaged the surprised enemy fighters with their rifles until CPT Ali was shot in the head. That prompted the group to get off the crest. Then CPT Konrad, using COL Abbas' laminated topographic map, called for CAS.⁶⁰

SSGT Macgregor, talking to two F-16s on station overhead, verified his location with a signal mirror. Konrad provided his initials to clear a "Danger Close" mission and a jet fighter swept down and dropped a 500 pound bomb on the DShK, less than a hundred meters away in the compound.⁶¹ That dampened the enemy fire.

SSG Bronson was busy treating the SWAT captain when CPT Muldoon (ODA 512), leading TF Raptor, approached them.⁶² Since the rest of ODA 563 and the Hilla SWAT police were out of sight around the corner in defensive positions along the south berm, CPT Muldoon was surprised when he saw the Americans. He was still unaware of the strength and capabilities of the enemy force in the compound and he was intent on locating the downed AH-64.⁶³

Muldoon was unsure who CPT Konrad was, why he was there, and what he was doing. The ODA 563 soldiers were likewise suspicious. They had heard that the Iraqi military had lost several HMMWVs (pronounced Humvees) to the enemy and facing them was a line of GMVs and the lead truck had a 7.62mm mini-gun.⁶⁴ This temporary pause in the action provides a natural break point for a two-part article on the Battle of An Najaf, 28-29 January 2007.

In Part II the intensity of the combat will be ratcheted up several notches. TF Raptor and ODA 566, intent on expanding their search for the downed Apache, will unknowingly choose a road that paralleled the long axis wall of the enemy compound. That twelve-foot high wall was fiercely defended by well-trained fighters with a seemingly limitless supply of ammunition for a wide variety of weapons. Running that gauntlet of heavy, point blank fire will be described by the participants in Part II of this article in the next *Veritas*.

The first day of the 28-29 January fight dramatically revealed the impact of Iraqi Army assumption of battle space control. The Americans were expected to help the Iraqi military and police break contact, often in the worst of circumstances. Politics played a major role in every Iraqi military operation. The need to train assault forces and SWAT police in small unit infantry tactics was realized, but more importantly, how much ammunition was carried by the soldiers, determined their level of aggressiveness and ability to sustain effective fire. American combat equipment worked. MICH helmets, individual body armor, and up-armored vehicles equipped with ballistic glass saved lives and enabled very courageous men to stay in the fight and trade fire with equally disciplined, well-

trained enemy soldiers.⁶⁵ ♠

Endnotes

- 1 CPT Eldon Johnson* interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 13 November 2007, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, LTC Christopher C. Miller, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 14 November 2007, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, and MSG Roger Ligon* and SSG Geoffrey Kendrick* interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 14 November 2007, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.
- 2 "Najaf," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Najaf>.
- 3 CPT Johnson* interview, 13 November 2007 and MSG Ligon and SSG Kendrick interview, 14 November 2007.
- 4 SSG Allen Lawrence* interview with Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 21 December 2007, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 5 CPT Johnson* interview, 13 November 2007.
- 6 MSG Ligon and SSG Kendrick interview, 14 November 2007.
- 7 CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007, MSG Ligon and SSG Kendrick interview, 14 November 2007, and MSG Ligon email to Dr. Briscoe, 28 May 2008, Subject: Corrections to Battle of An Najaf," USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 8 SSG Lawrence interview, 21 December 2007 and MSG Ligon email, 28 May 2008.
- 9 SSG Lawrence interview, 21 December 2007 and MSG Ligon email, 28 May 2008.
- 10 CPT Johnson* interview, 13 November 2007. *Fortunately, this was the first combat tour for only one or two personnel on ODA 566, which had just one 18X assigned.*
- 11 SSG Lawrence interview, 21 December 2007, and MSG Ligon email, 28 May 2008.
- 12 CPT Johnson* interview, 13 November 2007, MSG Ligon and SSG Kendrick interview, 14 November 2007, SSG Lawrence interview, 21 December 2007, and MSG Ligon email, 28 May 2008.
- 13 CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007, SFC Jack Carter interview, 23 January 2008, and SFC Seth Roberts* interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 5 December 2007, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 14 SSG Lawrence interview, 21 December 2007.
- 15 SFC Roberts interview, 5 December 2007.
- 16 CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007, SSG Lawrence interview, 21 December 2007, MSG Ligon and SSG Kendrick interview, 14 November 2007, SFC Jack Carter interview, 23 January 2008, and MSG Ligon email, 28 May 2008.
- 17 SFC Jack Carter interview, 23 January 2008 and MSG Ligon email, 28 May 2008.
- 18 "The Day of 'Ashura,'" <http://islam.about.com/od/otherdays/a/ashura.htm> and CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007.
- 19 MAJ Jack Guardino* interviews with Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 14 and 15 November 2007, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. *TF Raptor, moving rapidly along Route Tampa, the most dangerous highway in Iraq [an "IED (improvised explosive device) runaway" explained MAJ Guardino], inadvertently drove into Ad Diwaniyah on the way to An Najaf. As the heavily armed strike force muscled its way through the crowds of pilgrims in daylight, their presence became blatantly obvious.*
- 20 CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007 and MSG Ligon email, 28 May 2008. *"Our GMVs were always kept 100% operationally ready for just this type situation," said SSG Kendrick.* MSG Ligon and SSG Kendrick interview, 14 November 2007.
- 21 SSG Lawrence interview, 21 December 2007.
- 22 CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007.
- 23 SFC Roberts interview, 5 December 2007 and MSG Ligon email, 28 May 2008.
- 24 CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007.

Charles H. Briscoe has been the USASOC Command Historian since 2000. He earned his PhD from the University of South Carolina and is a retired Army special operations officer. Current research interests include Army special operations during the Korean War, in El Salvador, and Colombia.

- 25 MSG Sam Kavanaugh* interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 13 November 2007, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, and SFC Zeke Monroe* telephone interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 13 June 2008, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 26 MSG Kavanaugh interview, 13 November 2007.
- 27 MAJ Guardino interview, 15 November 2007, CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007, and MAJ Guardino email, 22 May 2008. **One unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) overhead belonged to AOB 560 at Hilla. Another had been dispatched to overfly the area when the Apache helicopter was shot down. AOB 560 and FOB 52 had "video feeds" from these two in their Op Cens, but communications to all engaged forces was poor throughout the fight. While message relays were done, the resulting traffic was often disjointed, incomplete, or "overtaken by events" (OBE).** LTC Miller interview, 14 November 2007.
- 28 MAJ Guardino* interview, 15 November 2007, CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007, and MAJ Guardino email to Dr. Briscoe, 22 May 2008, Subject: An Najaf Article, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 29 LTC Miller interview, 14 November 2007.
- 30 LTC Miller interview, 14 November 2007 and SFC Jack Carter interview, 23 January 2008.
- 31 CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007.
- 32 CPT Muldoon interview, 13 November 2007 and SSG Adam Donitz* telephone interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 12 June 2008, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 33 MSG Ligon and SSG Kendrick interview, 14 November 2007, CPT Johnson interview, 14 November 2007, and LTC Miller interview, 14 November 2007.
- 34 SFC Carter interview, 23 January 2008.
- 35 CPT Muldoon interview, 13 November 2007.
- 36 MSG Kirkwood interview, 13 November 2007 and SSG Donitz interview, 12 June 2008.
- 37 CPT Muldoon interview, 13 November 2007.
- 38 MSG Ligon and SSG Kendrick interview, 14 November 2007. **"During the first bound, I felt the rounds hitting my truck. During the second bound, the truck didn't feel right. On the third bound, the drive train was slipping and I thought that the transmission was shot out. When I got the word to make the fourth bound, I hit the gas. The engine revved and nothing happened. Everyone else moved out leaving my truck behind the assault line," said SSG Allen Lawrence.** SSG Lawrence interview, 21 December 2007.
- 39 MAJ Guardino interview, 15 November 2007, CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007, MSG Ligon and SSG Kendrick interview, 14 November 2007.
- 40 MAJ Guardino interview, 15 November 2007, and CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007.
- 41 CPT Johnson interview, 14 November 2007, MAJ Brockman interview, 4 December 2007, and MAJ Guardino interview, 15 November 2007.
- 42 CPT Robert Konrad* and MSG Shamus Flanagan* interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 15 November 2007, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, MAJ Brockman interview, 14 December 2007, MSG Shamus Flanagan,* SSG Jesse Bartram,* SSG Daniel Malcolm,* and SSG Carl Apo* interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 4 December 2007, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. **COL Abbas, Deputy Police Chief for Babel Province, had taken control of the Hilla SWAT battalion after COL Salaam and his executive officer, MAJ Tahir, were killed in mid-October 2006. A traitorous SWAT officer had placed a large IED against the wall of their offices in the SWAT headquarters building. General Qais, the Police Chief, gave COL Abbas that role to prevent a favored political appointee from getting the position.** CPT Konrad and MSG Flanagan interview, 15 November 2007.
- 43 MSG Flanagan, SSG Bartram, SSG Malcolm, and SSG Apo interview, 4 December 2007.
- 44 MAJ Guardino interview, 15 November 2007, CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007, and MAJ Walt Brockman interview, 4 December 2007.
- 45 MSG Ligon and SSG Kendrick interview, 14 November 2007.
- 46 CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007.
- 47 MSG Kavanaugh interview, 13 November 2007, SSG Lawrence interview, 21 December 2007 and CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007. **It was standing operating procedures (SOP) for the U.S. Forces command (1st Cavalry Division) to dispatch a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) to recover downed Allied aircrews as soon as they received the report. The 1st Battalion, 3rd Infantry, 4/25 Infantry Brigade Combat Team at Camp Kalsu, about an hour north of Hilla had the QRF mission. Their lead elements were on the road to An Najaf within an hour.** LTC Miller interview, 14 November 2007 and MAJ Walt Brockman interview, 4 December 2007.
- 48 CPT Muldoon interview, 13 November 2007, MAJ Guardino interview, 15 November 2007, and CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007.
- 49 CPT Muldoon interview, 13 November 2007, MAJ Guardino interview, 15 November 2007, CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007, and SFC Jack Carter interview, 23 January 2008.
- 50 MAJ Guardino interview, 15 November 2007, CPT Johnson interview, 13 November 2007, and SSG Lawrence interview, 21 December 2007.
- 51 CPT Konrad and MSG Flanagan interview, 15 November 2007 and MSG Flanagan, SSG Bartram, SSG Malcolm, and SSG Apo interview, 4 December 2007, and MAJ Brockman interview, 4 December 2007.
- 52 MSG Flanagan, SSG Bartram, SSG Malcolm, and SSG Apo interview, 4 December 2007.
- 53 CPT Konrad and MSG Flanagan interview, 15 November 2007 and MSG Flanagan, SSG Bartram, SSG Malcolm, and SSG Apo interview, 4 December 2007.
- 54 CPT Konrad and MSG Flanagan interview, 15 November 2007.
- 55 MSG Flanagan, SSG Bartram, SSG Malcolm, and SSG Apo interview, 4 December 2007.
- 56 CPT Konrad and MSG Flanagan interview, 15 November 2007.
- 57 MSG Flanagan, SSG Bartram, SSG Malcolm, and SSG Apo interview, 4 December 2007.
- 58 CPT Konrad and MSG Flanagan interview, 15 November 2007.
- 59 CPT Konrad email to Dr. Briscoe, 25 May 2008, subject: An Najaf Article, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 60 CPT Konrad email, 25 May 2008 and SSG Cliff Bronson* telephone interview with Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 16 June 2008, Fort Campbell, KY, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 61 CPT Konrad and MSG Flanagan interview, 15 November 2007 and MSG Flanagan, SSG Bartram, SSG Malcolm, and SSG Apo interview, 4 December 2007.
- 62 CPT Konrad and MSG Flanagan interview, 15 November 2007.
- 63 CPT Konrad interview, 13 November 2007, CPT Muldoon interview, 13 November 2007, and MSG Flanagan, SSG Bartram, SSG Malcolm, and SSG Apo interview, 4 December 2007.
- 64 CPT Konrad interview, 13 November 2007, CPT Muldoon interview, 13 November 2007, and MSG Flanagan, SSG Bartram, SSG Malcolm, and SSG Apo interview, 4 December 2007.
- 65 LTC Miller interview, 14 November 2007 and MAJ Brockman interview, 4 December 2007.

Wings Over Burma:

Air Support in the Burma Campaign

by Troy J. Sacquety

A C-47 careens through a narrow jungle-covered valley bordered by towering mountains. The crew finally spots the ground signal, and after determining that the drop zone (DZ) is correct, the “kickers” push the cargo out the door. First, bags of rice free fall to the ground. As they land with a thud, the airplane circles for another pass. Ammunition and other supplies float to earth under multi-colored parachutes. The airplane then makes a beeline for home, keeping low to the ground while the crew watches for Japanese fighters. This was a daily event in north Burma during WWII. The following article gives a brief overview of how aerial resupply overcame the logistical difficulties of north Burma operations, and then explains how it was utilized by a specific unit, the paramilitary Detachment 101 of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). It is relevant today because the pioneering efforts in the skies over north Burma influenced how aerial resupply would be done in numerous post-WWII conflicts.

The rugged, trackless, jungle-covered terrain that dominated north Burma made aerial resupply necessary. The lack of roads made it the best solution to meet the American-led Northern Combat Area Command's (NCAC) logistics requirements. This was despite the Japanese air threat, which was significantly reduced when NCAC forces captured the Myitkyina airfield on 17 May 1944.¹ North Burma was the one major American operational theater where aerial resupply to non-airborne ground forces was a routine practice. Cargo was delivered by the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) in three ways; by landing and unloading an airplane at an airstrip; by free-dropping supplies; or by parachuting cargo bundles. By 1945, the ability to conduct aerial resupply in north Burma was so well-developed that the USAAF drop squadrons sustained five Chinese and one British division, the MARS Task Force, numerous service troops, and 10,000 OSS-led guerrillas.²

The USAAF accomplished this difficult task by applying modern industrial assembly-line principles. Drop crews simply could not customize each supply run. Instead, most drops consisted of standard



In operations in Burma, U.S. troops required the most expensive rations, as shown above. Other troops, such as the Chinese, lived predominately on more simple fare like rice.



A kicker pushes supplies out the aircraft cargo door to a Detachment 101 group in Burma, 1944-45.



An OSS enlisted man attaches a parachute container to an ammunition crate. Critical items like ammunition and radios were air-dropped by parachute.

Right: Corporal George W. Patrick, 475th Infantry Regiment

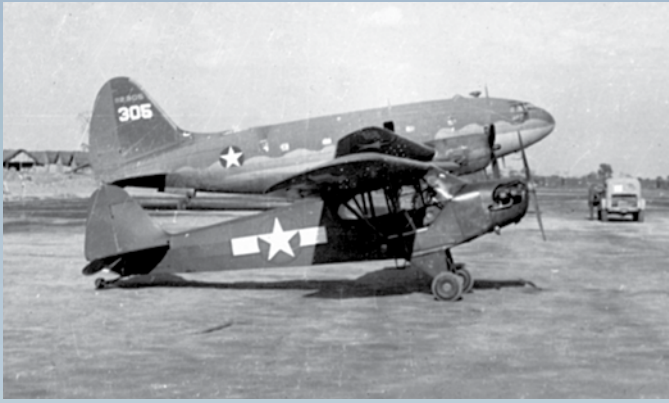


Left: First Lieutenant (1LT) Joseph E. Lazarsky headed the Detachment 101 Air Drop Section in early 1944. He later commanded the 1st Battalion of American Kachin Rangers.

packaged loads based on the number and type of troops. Differing food items for each of the multi-ethnic Allied groups fighting in north Burma required separate rations for each. For instance, Hindu troops would not eat beef, Muslim troops would not eat pork, Chinese troops required large amounts of rice, and American troops ate pre-packaged rations. Regardless of the nationality or ethnic group they were intended for each ration had basic components. They were nutritionally balanced and had the equivalent of a grain, a vegetable or fruit, and a meat or protein. These ration loads were loaded separately into the drop aircraft depending on the receiving unit and in the order that they went out of the airplane.³ Free-dropped items were loaded last so they could be dropped first and not foul parachute dropped supplies.

Aircraft were loaded overnight so they could take off early the next day, drop their load, and return to conduct a second supply mission if time allowed. Not only did this enable more supplies to get into the field, but it also maximized the use of scarce drop aircraft. First Lieutenant (1LT) Bernard M. Brophy, serving with OSS Detachment 101, recalled the grueling schedule. To load the aircraft he said, "we would be down at the airstrip at about four or five o'clock in the morning." By the time that they returned he said, "you could be out fifteen hours a day."⁴ While the aircraft were loaded, ground crews performed maintenance checks and refueled them. Around the clock operations were necessary. The number of troops requiring support, the limited number of cargo aircraft, and the unpredictable weather—especially during the monsoon season—dictated that supplies reach the field whenever possible.

Corporal George W. Patrick of the 475th Infantry Regiment of the MARS Task Force, recalled that they received air drops every three days.⁵ But, the efficiency of the USAAF made aerial resupply look easier from the ground than it was. Getting the supplies out to the field



The C-46 Commando (in background) had more power and carrying capacity than a C-47, but was not as easy to fly or as dependable. In front of the C-46 is a Piper Cub, in Army nomenclature, the L-4 Grasshopper, which was used for liaison and observation.

on time was even more crucial because most drop planes flew by day. Although done occasionally, the cargo aircraft did not have the navigational systems necessary for low-level night flights in the uncharted mountains.

The main resupply aircraft was the venerable Douglas C-47 Skytrain. Developed as the pre-war DC-3 airliner, the C-47 became the U.S. Army's major troop carrier in WWII and remained in service long after the war. The aircraft was so well-engineered and robustly built that numerous DC-3/C-47 airplanes are still commercially operated or serving foreign militaries almost seventy-five years after the first model was flown. The other major cargo aircraft was the Curtiss C-46 Commando. Originally designed to replace the C-47, it was rushed into wartime production. The airplane had numerous design flaws and was not as stable as the C-47. Although the C-46 could carry nearly twice the payload of a C-47 (6,000-7,000 pounds) pilots much preferred the latter.⁶ For special missions, the small, fast, .50 caliber-armed North American B-25 Mitchell medium bomber was used, but

the smaller cargo capacity limited its usefulness. On occasion, B-24 Liberator heavy bombers were employed. Several kinds of parachutes were also critical to safely airdrop supplies.

American-made "silk" (usually nylon or rayon because natural silk was scarce) parachutes performed the best. But, they were expensive and often not recoverable. At seventy dollars each—a substantial sum when a U.S. Army private during WWII made approximately \$50 a month—they simply could not be used for every item. Only fragile or explosive items such as ammunition, radios, and medical supplies, were dropped using these parachutes.

Much cheaper locally-produced parachutes made of jute (burlap) were substituted to make air resupply as simple and economical as possible, especially when heavy loads required more than one parachute. Lieutenant General William J. Slim, commander of the British 14th Army, explained that since Burma was at the bottom of the priority list for just about everything, and because the world's jute was grown in India, it was easy for the military to work with the cloth manufacturers. Within a month, they had designed a prototype parachute made entirely of jute—including the parachute lines—that proved to be "eighty-five per cent as efficient and reliable as the most elaborate parachute, at a twentieth of the cost."⁷ Cheaper parachutes were not the only challenge. The NCAC needed to devise ways to properly pack the supplies for air-drop.

Because of the large scale of the aerial supply in north Burma, NCAC had to make use of local packing materials. An easy-to-produce, sturdy, and cheap solution was the "country basket." It proved ideal. This was a burlap-covered bamboo basket that cost less than \$4 and was capable of holding 450 pounds. Secured to a parachute with heavy ¾ inch ropes, several could be kicked out in a single drop pass.⁸

Some supplies required special packing. Gasoline was put in individual fifty-five gallon drums, padded with sacks of rice hulls, and secured to a parachute.

A B-25 Mitchell makes a supply drop to an OSS Detachment 101 group near Htinnan, Burma, in late 1943 or early 1944. B-25s were used for the more dangerous supply runs, which required a faster, well-armed aircraft.





Unbreakable and bulky items, like rice or clothing, were free-dropped. For rice, the most common practice was to sew a half-full sack weighing thirty-five pounds into a second burlap bag. This prevented the bag from “exploding” when it hit the ground. Animal feed and salt were dropped the same way. The kickers on the drop aircraft had to be especially careful when free-dropping. An errant sack could easily demolish an indigenous hut, or *basha*, or kill personnel and pack animals. Although most Allied troops tried to get under cover during a free drop, some Asian troops did not understand the danger. Chinese troops in particular were indifferent when trying to “steal” supplies dropped to other groups. First Lieutenant Joseph E. Lazarsky, serving as an Air Drop Officer with OSS Detachment 101 in early 1944 recalled, “You had to really train the Kachins [the north Burma ethnic group working with the OSS] that rice is coming down ...



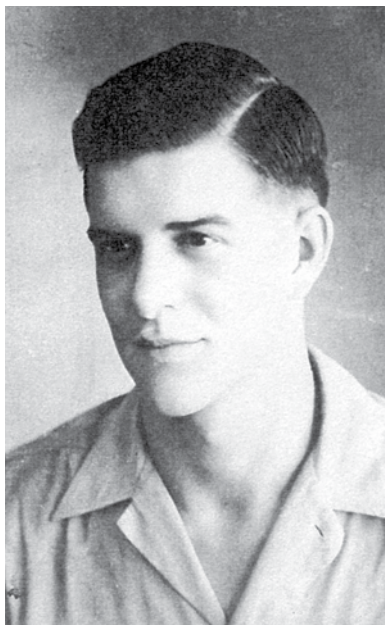
Once a drop was on the ground, the lack of roads meant delivery by animals. Here the MARS Task Force receives an air drop in Burma on 6 February 1945.

don’t try to catch it or you would be digging your own hole.” Nevertheless, he recalled that the Chinese tried to steal what they could from airdrops and often were “out there trying to catch the rice and were killed.”

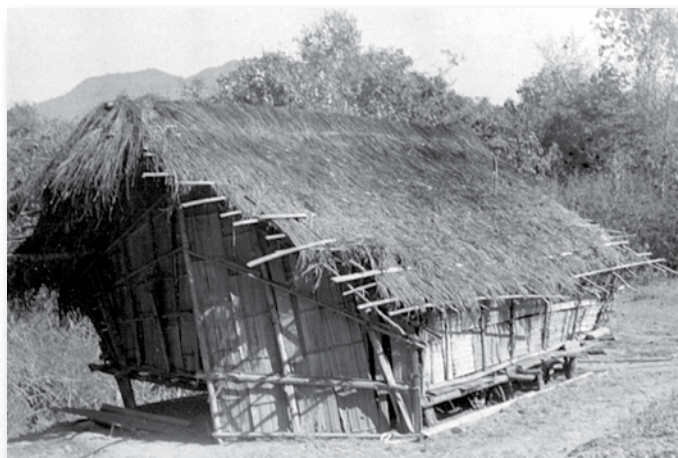
Above left, a C-47 conducts a free-drop. Below, another has landed for a medical evacuation (ambulances in foreground.) Free drops packed in burlap sacks accomodated less fragile supplies such as clothing (shown below center left) while gasoline was dropped in fifty-five gallon drums padded with rice hulls or sawdust (below center.) The “country basket,” a cheap, locally produced container, was used for fragile items. A logistician packs eggs in layers of sawdust or rice hulls to buffer the landing impact (shown below center right).



Private First Class (PFC) Richard W. Hale, 475th Infantry Regiment, MARS Task Force. The 5332nd Brigade (Provisional), known as the MARS Task Force, was a U.S. Army Long Range Penetration Group (LRPG) that served in Burma from late 1944 through mid-1945. It was then sent to China to help train Nationalist Chinese soldiers.



The rugged terrain made collection and transportation of airdropped supplies difficult. Despite the twentieth century marvel of delivering supplies by air, ground transportation was nineteenth century. Supplies were carried by the soldiers themselves, indigenous porters,



or by pack animals, usually mules. Standard twenty-five pound grain rations, supplemented with salt and minerals, were dropped to feed the mules.¹⁰ Generally, these techniques worked well with the conventional Allied forces in Burma.

“...don't try to catch it or you would be digging your own hole.”

Aerial resupply was crucial to the American ground campaign in north Burma. It allowed the infantry to conduct offensive combat operations against an enemy that had to rely on ground transportation for resupply. This enabled the Allies to attack the Japanese forces far behind their lines. Private First Class (PFC) Richard W. Hale, 475th Infantry Regiment, said; “EVERYTHING came by parachute, except free dropped grain for the mules! There were times on the trail when we missed some drops and missed a meal or two, but where it was really important ... the Air Corps did a great job. We did have one complaint about the packers back in Myitkyina: We had heard that the “K” rations had changed “Corned Pork and Egg (Yuck) Yolk” to “Ham and Eggs” for breakfast, and “Hamburger” for supper instead of some potted meat. We never saw any of that. We found out later that the peckerwood packers were pulling the new rations out of the packages and saving them for their snacks, and putting the old crap in the drop packages.

Before and after photos of a basha struck by an errant drop. A falling sack of rice could easily kill a soldier or a mule.



We would have shot them if we could have. On the other hand, one time the bakers in Ledo [India] made up a ton of fresh bread, and they dropped enough in bamboo baskets that we each got a loaf!"¹¹ Aerial resupply made it possible to drive the Japanese out of Burma. Although fighting was still going on in Southern Burma and to the east near the Thai border, by March 1945—five months before Japan surrendered—NCAC conventional forces were being withdrawn for missions in other theaters. Only the American-led indigenous guerrilla troops of OSS Detachment 101 remained in Burma.

Detachment 101

Detachment 101 had unique supply requirements. The unit had numerous assignments behind Japanese lines. It recruited, armed, and led indigenous guerrilla troops, while its agents were the most valuable intelligence collectors on the battlefield. They regularly found hidden targets for 10th USAAF bombers and rescued downed Allied aircrews. Called "the most effective tactical combat force in OSS," Detachment 101 was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for its service in north Burma.¹² It was the OSS unit that most closely mirrored the capabilities found in today's U.S. Army Special Forces Groups. Its Air Drop Section was the key element to sustaining field operations. It provided "guides" and supply kickers that flew aboard USAAF cargo aircraft.

Established late in 1943 to better resupply Detachment 101 groups behind the lines, the Air Drop Section conducted eighteen airdrops to deliver 84,000 pounds of supplies in its first two months of operations, (November to mid-December 1943).¹³ Supply requirements grew as the OSS guerrilla force expanded. By October 1944, the Air Drop Section was preparing and "kicking" more than a million pounds of supplies into the field monthly. By March 1945, the increased supply requirements of Detachment 101 caused the 10th USAAF to dedicate ten C-47s to that mission.¹⁴

Resupply began in the Detachment 101 Supply Section. Requests from units in the field were drawn out of stocks at Detachment 101 headquarters in Nazira, India, and shipped to Dinjan, where the USAAF drop squadrons were stationed.¹⁵ Later in the war, the OSS established warehouses at Dinjan to hold mission-specific and general use items. The group divided its storage facilities by the supplies or functions in each. One warehouse was



Allied areas of operations in Japanese-occupied Burma.

dedicated for packing parachutes and bundles; two for arms and ammunition; and the remainder for other supplies which included silver Indian rupees and opium to pay the indigenous troops. Ammunition was stocked for a multitude of weapons; British .303 caliber Enfield Rifles and Bren light machineguns; .45 caliber Thompson submachineguns; .30-06 caliber M1 Garand and M1941 Johnson Rifles; .30 caliber M1 Carbines; and 9mm Sten and Marlin UD-42 submachineguns.¹⁶ This arrangement reduced the packing time. By March 1945, the Detachment had sixteen warehouses at Dinjan to store a two-month supply reserve; 2,225,925 pounds of rations and 1,000,000 pounds of ordnance and quartermaster supplies.¹⁷ These stores were often rapidly depleted. In March 1945 alone, 249 C-47, 7 B-24s, and 9 B-25 sorties delivered 1,476,942 pounds of supplies; more than half of the on-hand reserve.¹⁸

The 2nd Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS) was one of the USAAF units that provided valuable support to



The Stinson L-1 Vigilant was the preferred liaison aircraft for Detachment 101's unofficial air force, the "Red Ass Squadron."



Air Drop supply bundles are rigged with parachutes at a Detachment 101 supply warehouse, 1944-1945.



Enlisted men of the Detachment 101 Air Drop Section rest on bundles inside a cargo aircraft. Corporal Ernest J. Tsikerdanos is on the left and Technician Third Grade Damon S. Diomandes is in the middle.



A Detachment 101 "kicker" readies a bundle to go out the door over Burma in 1944.

Detachment 101. The aircrews—all experienced and skilled volunteers—were given a security brief and told never to reveal the location, cargo, or personnel dropped.¹⁹ The role of Detachment 101 Air Drop personnel was demanding. 1LT Joseph E. Lazarsky, who directed the Air Drop Section in early 1944 before commanding a field unit, worked at the 2nd TCS headquarters at Dinjan. "I stayed with them, and I ate with them. My relationship with the 2nd was so good ... we became priority number one."²⁰ First Lieutenant Oliver A. Ryder, another Air Drop officer who worked with the 2nd Combat Cargo Squadron in 1945, said, "I had flown a lot more than the aircrews ... simply because there was only one of me." Ryder flew so much that the squadron's flight surgeon grounded him because he was so worn out after more than 600 hours of flight time. While hospitalized, Ryder

had a Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster pinned on his pajamas.²¹

Supply requests from the units in the field came to Detachment 101 headquarters. From there, and depending on where the flight was to go, the orders went either to Dinjan, or to supplementary Air Drop personnel based at Myitkyina (after June 1944).²² Airplanes were loaded by indigenous laborers. 1LT Bernard Brophy, working out of Myitkyina in mid-1944, based each unit's ration supply on the size of the group and the time since their last drop. "We had a formula for food. We knew how much we had to get in there."²³ Brophy recalled, "It took a couple of hours" to pack each airplane. "Some of the things would come in



China-Burma-India Theater SSI



Detachment 101 Kachin (Jingpaw) Ranger Patch



10th Air Force SSI



MARS Task Force Patch

already packaged with the parachute on it. Other times we had to put it in boxes or crates, attach the parachute to it, and make sure we had the right weight. You didn't want it too heavy otherwise some of the panels on the chute would blow, come down too fast, smash-up, and ruin the drop. So, we had to be careful about that ... most of the time everything went fine."²⁴ Brophy said that the weight distribution aboard the C-47 was also a concern. "You had to make sure that you had the weight on both sides the same and not too much in the tail. You had to distribute it [evenly] throughout the fuselage so that you had good take offs and good landings."²⁵ 1LT Ryder, at Dinjan said, "You could not tell from one time to the next what the hell it [the load] would be." Then, it was simply a matter of getting the aircraft into the air.

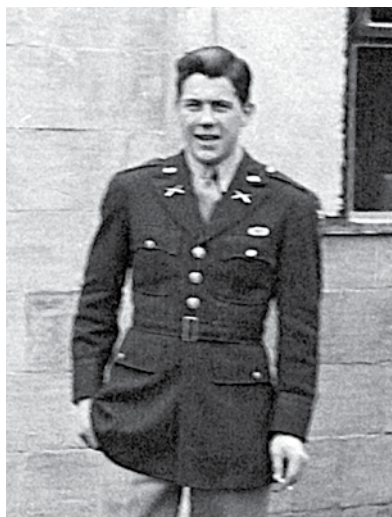
Early in the war, Detachment 101 could dedicate few personnel for door kicking. By 1944, however, there were several OSS kickers on each drop aircraft, usually an officer and some enlisted men. Ryder remembered, "We would take off before dawn. I will never forget that. I would stand between the pilot and copilot to see the beautiful dawn. It was a gorgeous and beautiful sight. They reminded me of sunrises over Nags Head, North Carolina."²⁶ Once the drop aircraft reached north Burma, "the jungle looks all the same from up above. But, even where it was bad [no landmarks], I knew where the [OSS] guys were," said 1LT Lazarsky.²⁷

The OSS personnel on the ground were to signal the incoming drop if they had seen any Japanese fighter aircraft in the area. Otherwise, unarmed drop airplanes would have been sitting ducks if intercepted. Should the Japanese appear, the drop aircraft turned around, because it was "not worth it ... you get your ass shot down and that's it," said Lazarsky.²⁸ This reality had been driven home on 18 January 1944. Japanese "Zero" fighters shot down three 2nd TCS C-47s as they tried to resupply Detachment 101's FORWARD Group. Seventeen airmen and six OSS men were killed, including Second Lieutenant (2LT) Thomas R. Riley, then chief of the Air Drop Section.²⁹

By 1945, when 1LT Ryder was flying Air Drop out of Dinjan, the Allies had air superiority so Japanese fighters were not a factor. "I knew the targets, having been there more than they had. I was an aerial observer

in a sense. To get to the DZ, you had to recognize certain landmarks, like rivers, landforms, and villages. You simply learned your way to the DZ. [Once] we got

over the target ... it was pretty much up to me. The pilots would fly circles over the area and make runs ... one, two, three, four. You kind of half-ass knew when to get it out the door. We knew when we were in the target area and you just



1LT Bernard M. Brophy, initially part of the OSS Jedburgh program, was later assigned to Detachment 101. He served in Air Drop before going to the field.

"I had flown a lot more than the aircrews ... simply because there was only one of me."

give the green light kick signal and out it would go. It was reasonably accurate," said Ryder.³⁰ The regularity of the runs enabled him to recognize particular OSS men on the ground. 1LT Daniel Mudrinich, "was always standing out on the dropzone. I got to know him as a little

black haired kid. I would stand in the door and have the pilot make another pass to wave goodbye and he would wave back. I got to know him through those drops." It was only years later that the two met one another at a postwar reunion.³¹

1LT Brophy, flying Air Drop out of Myitkyina in mid-to-late 1944, had shorter flights. "It would take maybe six to eight hours off the airdrop time. Guys were only 150 or as close as 25 miles away ... It made it a lot easier to get stuff to them," recalled Brophy.³² However, there could also be problems during an airdrop. "The pilots were good. They knew how to come into the DZ and how to maneuver the airplane to keep the tail up, so that the stuff going out

the door did not hit the tail. With a new pilot the stuff going out would hit the tail and [the wind would cause it to] hang there ... until he slowed the plane down to a point that it would fall off."³³

Tremendous wind gusts, especially over mountainous terrain, caused other problems. Brophy recalled, "Sometimes it got a little tricky. You would be carrying a bag of rice and hit a downdraft. The bag of rice would go up in the air and you could hold it up with one finger. On the other hand, you'd hit an updraft and [the rice sack]



1LT Oliver A. Ryder (left) was a qualified parachutist assigned to the Detachment 101 Air Drop Section. On the right is CPT Zachariah Ebaugh, who served in a field unit.



A Detachment 101 drop zone as seen from the air. Notice how parachutes were used as marking panels.



On 18 January 1944, three C-47s of the 10th USAAF 2nd Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS) were shot down, and seventeen airmen and six OSS personnel killed. One of the crashed C-47s was located by Detachment 101 agents. Although inactivated in December 1945, the 2nd TCS was reactivated as the 2nd Airlift Squadron at Pope Air Force Base (AFB), NC, on 1 June 1992. It is still based at Pope AFB.

would weigh 250 pounds. It would push you down to the floor of the plane."

Uncharted areas were also an issue. "You'd be flying into unexplored mountains. On the map there would be a blank space, just plain white. In the middle of that space it would say 'unexplored.' You did not know what was there, so we were a little concerned about that," chuckled Brophy.³⁴

If all went well, the pilot would activate the jump lights in the rear of the airplane to tell the kickers when to push the supplies out. "The red light meant that you were to get ready and move the loads into position. We would check for the panels at the drop zone to see if everything was all right there, and keep an eye on that light. As soon as that green light went on, everything would be pushed out the door. You would have one guy on the left side of the door,

one on the right, and one guy with his back [braced] against the opposite side of the fuselage with his feet up against the back of the stuff that you were kicking out the door. I would say 'go' and one guy would push with his right arm, the other guy with his left arm, and the guy in the back would push with both feet. I would usually be [guiding the load] and looking out the door," said Brophy.³⁵

"...the stuff going out the door would hit the tail and hang there...until the pilot slowed the plane down to a point that it would fall off."



Second Lieutenant Thomas R. Riley was the first qualified parachutist in charge of the Air Drop Section at Detachment 101. He was killed on 18 January 1944 when his C-47 was shot down by Japanese fighter aircraft. Colonel William R. Peers, the last commanding officer of Detachment 101, kept a photograph of Riley above his desk for the remainder of the war.

One final hazard involved getting the supplies out the door. The kickers did not have any safety straps. "There was [only] a bar on each side. They [the kickers] held on with one hand, and pushed with the other. They went halfway out the door as they pushed. We got used to that; it was no problem," remembered Brophy.³⁶ But, it was hazardous duty. Staff Sergeant "Bud" Banker, who, as a first-time kicker, recalled one incident. "The pilot tilted the airplane to help get the cargo out because it was quite heavy. When



2nd Troop Carrier Squadron Patch, WWII



2nd Airlift Squadron Patch, Pope AFB, NC

that happened, we were on our own. We had to hang on with our arms. One of the kickers got his foot caught [in the cargo] and he starting to go out of the plane. I reached out and was lucky. I grabbed him around his waist and held on for dear life. At the last minute his foot released

“...They held on with one hand, and pushed with the other. They went half way out the door as they pushed...”

from the cargo,” said Banker. “He could have been pulled out of the door. We had no parachutes because they would have been in the way.”³⁷ No matter what might occur on a drop, after it was finished, the kickers went back to base, got some sleep, because “early the next morning you were doing the same thing” recalled Brophy.³⁸ Most drops were done in daylight, but some were made at night.

Night drops required more preparations by the receiving personnel. On 9 March 1944, during the Myitkyina campaign, the FORWARD Group desperately needed a resupply drop. That night, the OSS personnel positioned kerosene by their campfires to quickly raise the flames when the drop aircraft were heard approaching. As the group was sitting down to eat at dusk, the airplanes showed up. 1LT Daniel Mudrinich wrote in the group’s daily log, “They had a little trouble at first. They were circling way east of us. Finally, the third [C-47] saw our fires and panel. He let go with a free drop which went well beyond the target. I got a flashlight and redirected them ... It took over 30 minutes for the entire drop to come down. All hands worked until 10 P.M,” to collect the supplies. By noon the next day, Mudrinich reported that all loads had been stored away and that “everyone was tired as hell.”³⁹

Detachment 101 elements inadvertently performed Civil Affairs. The indigenous people had been unable to obtain basics like cloth, salt, and yarn since the Japanese invasion in 1942. The OSS included these basic essentials in their supply requests and endeared themselves to the locals. The drop parachutes were often “gifted” to the



“Kickers” prepare to drop supplies over north Burma. A soldier pushes from each side as one helps with his feet from the rear.



Lieutenants Harry Council, Joe Lazarsky, and Daniel Mudrinich pose by a C-47 in 1943. The photo was taken just prior to Council and Mudrinich being inserted to join the FORWARD group, northeast of Myitkyina.

people as thanks for supporting the Allies. These simple presents greatly helped the Allied effort.

Aerial resupply was the lifeline for Detachment 101 of the OSS. Operating in enemy-occupied territory, the group could not rely on the local population for support.

A USAAF C-47 “buzzes” the field after completing a drop to a Detachment 101 group in Burma, 1944-1945.



Detachment 101: Air Drop by the Numbers...



1. Supply warehouse at Detachment 101 Headquarters in Nazira, India.



2. Air Drop personel pack supplies outside an improvised warehouse.



5. Technical Sergeant Steven J. Wargo (center facing) checks drop containers at Nazira, India, (late 1943). These were later replaced by more economical and practical versions.



6. Detachment 101 personnel load cargo into a C-47 Skytrain.



9. OSS personel demonstrate how they pushed supplies out of the aircraft. Notice there are no safety straps and the parachute is simply boxed.



10. Two supply bundles for an OSS Detachment 101 group float to earth in north Burma, 1944.



3. Detachment 101 supply personnel in India tie together cases of corn, peas, and spinach for air drop. Locally-hired laborers helped package the loads.



4. Sergeant Harold "Bud" Banker checks a British Bren light machinegun out of the Detachment 101 supply warehouse in Nazira, India. The Indian porter in the front carries a case of .303 caliber bullets on his head.



7. The interior of a C-47 cargo aircraft loaded with supplies for air drop. Most are burlap (jute) wrapped packages.



8. Detachment 101 Air Drop personnel wait to kick supplies from a fully loaded C-47 over Burma, 1944.



11. An OSS Detachment 101 group receives a supply drop in north Burma, late 1944-early 1945.



12. An ammunition crate after landing. Note how the "boxed" parachute was secured to the crate.



Detachment 101's 7th Battalion, American Kachin Rangers, repacks a supply drop for movement near Langtaw, Burma, February 1945.



Sergeant Harold "Bud" Banker works on a United Defense UD-42 or "Marlin" submachinegun at the Detachment 101 supply depot at Nazira, India.



Detachment 101 armed thousands of indigenous guerrilla troops. Pictured are ethnic Shans near Wan Kat Ping, Burma, April 1945, armed with a variety of weapons: .30-06 caliber Johnson light machineguns, Johnson rifles, .45 caliber Thompson submachineguns, and a .303 caliber Bren gun.

While logistics in Detachment 101 got little recognition, aerial resupply was the unit's most dangerous mission. The vast majority of fatalities in Detachment 101 were from aircraft accidents. Of these, most were personnel involved in supply drops. Without its Air Drop Section, Detachment 101 could not have armed and supplied the 10,000 indigenous troops fielded in early 1945. ♣

Aerial Resupply Costs in Burma

Aerial resupply solved many Allied logistical problems in Burma and helped to end the war there much sooner. But, it came at a high cost. American nylon parachutes cost \$72.00 in 1945 (the equivalent of \$860 in 2008 dollars). Even with burlap parachutes, the price to air drop a ton of supplies—without including the average flight costs of \$1,285 per sortie (\$15,300 in 2008)—was \$1,909.65 (or \$22,800 in today's dollars). Free dropping supplies—excluding the sortie cost—was only \$94.07 (\$1,123 today). Considering that 30,000 tons of supplies were parachuted, another 33,000 free dropped, and 90,000 tons air landed by the USAAF supporting NCAC from April 1943 to March 1945, it was expensive, but vital.⁴⁰

Special thanks go to Detachment 101 veterans Harold "Bud" Banker, Joe Lazarsky, Oliver "Red" Ryder, Daniel Mudrinich, and Bernard Brophy; and to MARS Task Force/475th Infantry Regiment veterans Richard W. Hale and George W. Patrick for their time, assistance, photographs, expertise, and help. Thanks also go to William Chandler, Mrs. Zafiro Tsikerdanos and to Brian's Squadron Patches of WWII at www.Fly.To/WWII for use of photos and patches.

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Endnotes

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- 3 Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 104-106.
- 4 Bernard Brophy, telephone interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 9 April 2008, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 5 George W. Patrick, interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 23 April 2008, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. Patrick was an infantryman in B Company, 1st Battalion, 475th Infantry Regiment. The MARS Task Force was the second American Long Range Penetration Group in Burma. Merrill's Marauder's was the first.
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- 11 Richard W. Hale, e-mail to Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 3 April 2008, subject MARS Task Force, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 12 Kermit Roosevelt, *The War Report of the OSS: The Overseas Targets* (New York: Walker and Company, 1976), xvii.
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OPERATION COTTAGE:

First Special Service Force,
Kiska Campaign

By Kenneth Finlayson



Shortly after midnight on 14 August, 1943, the soldiers climbed into their small rubber assault boats from landing craft for the two-mile paddle to the barren, fog-enshrouded island. The troops of the First Special Service Force faced a strong wind and choppy seas as they headed for their assigned beaches. Starting at 0130 hours, the campaign to oust the Japanese from the Aleutian island of Kiska, Operation COTTAGE, got underway. It was to be the first combat for this unique Canadian-American unit.

The First Special Service Force (FSSF) was a joint Canadian-American 2300-man regiment created in 1942 for Operation PLOUGH, a special mission in Norway.¹ PLOUGH was to cross German-occupied Norway in winter via the country's snow-covered central plateau, and destroy fourteen hydro-electric dams. These dams supplied nearly 50% of Norway's electricity and were vital to supporting the German war effort.² The FSSF was created specifically for this hazardous assignment.

The FSSF was activated on 20 July 1942 at the newly-constructed Fort William Henry Harrison outside of Helena, Montana. American volunteers arrived in a steady stream in July. The first of 900 Canadian troops arrived in August.³ The unit was organized into three regiments, each with two infantry battalions of three companies.⁴ A separate service battalion supported the three regiments. The FSSF Service Battalion was organized with a headquarters company, maintenance company, service company, medical detachment, and communications detachment. A dedicated photographic section documented the Force training using motion picture and still photography. The Service Battalion performed all administrative and maintenance duties and freed the combat units to focus on training.⁵

Colonel (COL) Robert T. Frederick, the FSSF commander, instituted a rugged program of cross-country marches, mountaineering, and parachute training to build an exceptional light infantry force. During the Montana winter, skiing was taught by Norwegian instructors. To support PLOUGH, the Studebaker automobile company developed the T-15 Light Cargo



Rows of the T-15 Light Cargo Carrier, the "Weasel" produced by Studebaker for use by the First Special Service Force in the PLOUGH operation are lined up at Fort William Henry Harrison, Montana, winter of 1942-43.



A joint Canadian-American Retreat ceremony performed at Fort William Henry Harrison, Montana, 1942. The First Special Service Force was a formidable fighting unit that seamlessly blended the soldiers of two nations.

Forcemen on a march to Marysville, Montana. The arduous 48-mile road march in khaki shorts was a culminating event in COL Robert Frederick's rigorous training program to prepare the First Special Service Force for combat.



Carrier; an over-the-snow vehicle nicknamed the “Weasel,” to transport men and supplies.⁶ The Force was at an extremely high state of readiness when PLOUGH was cancelled in September 1942.⁷ Insurmountable logistical problems and insufficient aircraft caused the mission to be scrapped. Without a mission, the continued existence of the Force was placed in jeopardy.

COL Frederick immediately flew to Washington DC to get a new assignment for his unit. The Canadian government agreed in October 1942 to keep its forces in the FSSF if a viable mission could be found.⁸ Potential operations were HUSKY, the planned Allied invasion of Sicily, a PLOUGH-like expedition forecasted for the Caucasus region of Russia, New Guinea, and the Allied campaign against the Japanese-occupied Aleutian Islands.⁹ As events unfolded, the Force was committed to the invasion of Kiska in the Aleutians.

The Japanese invaded and occupied the Aleutian islands of Attu and Kiska on 6 and 7 June, 1942, to draw U.S. naval strength away from its main effort against Midway, where the Imperial General Staff hoped to deliver a final knock-out blow to the U.S. Navy in the heart of the Pacific.¹⁰ With airfields on the two Aleutian islands they could interdict Allied operations against the Japanese homeland from the North Pacific. The Japanese defeat at the Battle of Midway marooned the Aleutian garrisons at the end of a long, tenuous supply line. Building airfields on each island proved impossible.

The Japanese did not possess adequate construction



The Japanese bombed the village of Dutch Harbor on Unalaska Island on 3 June 1942. This was one of the few attempts by the Japanese to bring the war to the Allies from their bases on Attu and Kiska.

equipment to build airfields on the rocky volcanic islands. They were forced to use hand labor with picks and shovels. Their efforts failed on both islands. The two small garrisons of Japanese Army and Navy personnel, 3,500 on Attu and 5,200 on Kiska, withered on their remote, wind-swept outposts. The Aleutian occupation proved to be a “running sore” for the Japanese instead of a platform to attack the North American mainland. The Japanese were impotent. They could do little more than wait for the inevitable Allied assault. With the major Allied operations in North Africa and the Pacific constraining resources and with a complex theater command and control structure, driving the Japanese



The Aleutian Islands are formed from the partially submerged mountains of Alaska's Aleutian Range. Stretching for over 1100 miles in an arc south and west of the Alaska Peninsula, more than 160 named islands of the archipelago separate the Pacific Ocean from the Bering Sea. Discovered by Vitus Bering in 1741, the sparsely populated Aleutians were home to native Aleuts for several hundred years before the influx of white settlers, trappers, and fishermen changed their traditional way of life. The two main settlements in the chain are at Unalaska (Dutch Harbor) and Adak. The weather in the Aleutians is notoriously cold with high winds, heavy rains, and thick, near continuous fog.¹¹



Bulldozers dredging sand from Adak inlet to use as fill for the new airstrip. The ability of the U.S. forces to construct airfields in the Aleutians was a major factor in defeating the Japanese forces on the islands.

from their only hold on American soil was not a priority for the U.S. military.

Overall command of the Aleutians was the responsibility of the Navy. Lacking a unified command structure, operations in the North Pacific Area depended on mutual co-operation by the services. Service interests differed in the theater with the Navy's primary concern being to free up ships for operations in the Pacific, while the Army sought to remove the Japanese threat to mainland North America. This complicated command and control structure, was made more complex by the necessity of including Canadian forces in operations planning.

LTG John L. Dewitt, the commanding general of Western Defense Command, pushed early for an offensive to drive out the Japanese. A week after the occupation of Attu and Kiska by the Japanese, Dewitt petitioned General (GEN) George C. Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff for additional troops to take back the islands as the first phase for attacking Japan via the North Pacific.¹⁴ With the resources of the Allies strained to the utmost by operations in North Africa and the South Pacific, his proposal was rejected. Undeterred, Dewitt developed a more modest plan that, with Navy support, sought to take the Aleutian island of Tanaga as a staging base

OPERATIONS in the Aleutians took place in the North Pacific Area (NPA), one of three subordinate commands in Admiral (ADM) Chester A. Nimitz's vast Pacific Ocean Areas Command. The Commander of the NPA exercised operational control (OPCON) of all forces in the theater.¹² The Western Defense Command (WDC) under Lieutenant General (LTG) John L. Dewitt provided the Army forces (roughly 51,000 men). The WDC encompassed Alaska and the northwest coast of Canada. Part of the WDC was the Alaska Defense Command (ADC), a subordinate headquarters under Major General (MG) Simon B. Buckner Jr. Brigadier General (BG) William C. Butler's Eleventh Air Force provided air support to the theater.¹³

for an assault on Kiska. Though favored by the Army staff, the Navy's counter-proposal was to land on Adak, which had better harbor facilities. By mid-August, the negotiations between the services were completed, and on 30 August 1942, 4,500 Army soldiers from the Alaska Defense Command landed on Adak.¹⁵ Better equipped, U.S. combat engineers soon had an airstrip carved out of the volcanic rock, proving ADM William F. "Bull" Halsey's (Commander of the U.S Third Fleet) claim that "one of the four most important assets for winning the war was the bulldozer."¹⁶ Within two weeks, Adak-based aircraft were attacking the Japanese on Kiska 240 miles away. A plan to recapture Attu and Kiska could not be agreed upon by the two services.

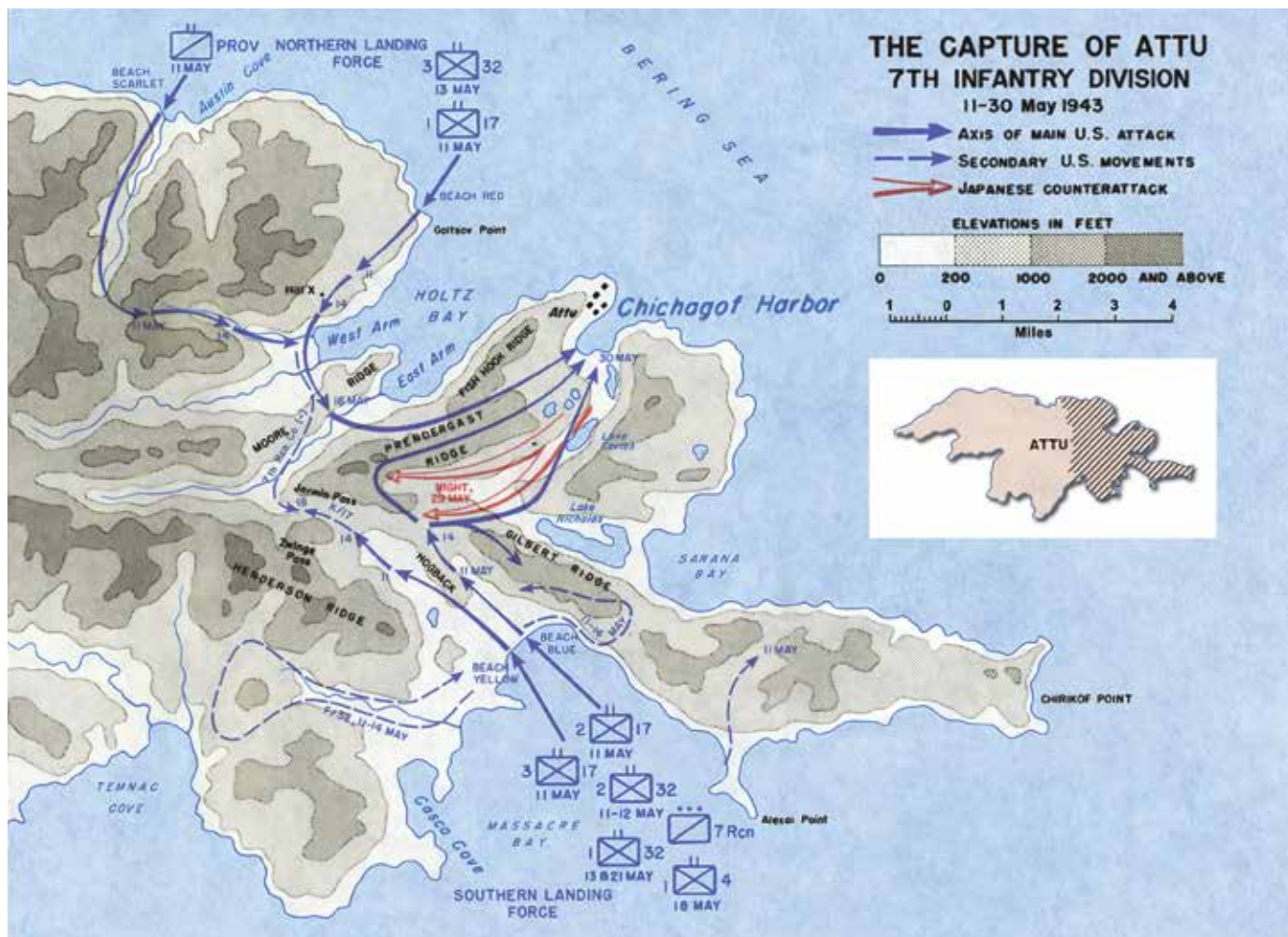
"one of the four most important assets for winning the war was the bulldozer."

Operations languished until the end of 1942. In January 1943 Rear Admiral (RADM) Thomas C. Kinkaid, a veteran of the South Pacific campaign took over the North Pacific Area. He pushed for joint operations, and under the impetus of ADM Nimitz's expressed desire to free up naval forces in the North Pacific for operations elsewhere, Army forces landed on the island of Amchitka, 40 miles east of Kiska.

The harsh winter weather prevented any campaigning until the spring. In May 1943, the Allies launched their first assault on the Japanese in the Aleutians. The operation by-passed Kiska and targeted the more remote island of Attu.

Attu Island is the westernmost in the Aleutian chain, nearly 1,100 miles from mainland Alaska. Some 20 miles long and 35 miles wide, it is one of the largest in the archipelago. The Allied invasion was called Operation SANDCRAB. It was the only land battle of World War II fought on U.S. territory. The main landing force was the 7th Infantry Division (7th ID), which conducted amphibious training at Fort Ord, California in April 1943 prior to heading north. A Navy Task Force of three battleships, an escort carrier, and seven destroyers supported the landing. Two naval covering forces of cruisers and destroyers were deployed to block any Japanese attempt to reinforce their troops on the island. The Eleventh Air Force flying from Adak and Amchitka, provided 54 B-24 Liberator bombers and 128 P-38 Lightning fighters to support the invasion forces.¹⁷

Following several days of delay due to inclement weather, the 7th ID landed on 11 May at three widely separated locations on the eastern side of the island. The final objective was the main Japanese base at Chichagof Harbor. Within five hours, MG Albert E. Brown, the commander of the 7th ID had 3,500 men ashore facing what intelligence reported was less than 1,500 Japanese.¹⁸



The Allied landings on Attu were designed to converge on the Japanese base at Chichagof Harbor. The landing force suffered heavy casualties. The Japanese fiercely defended the tough terrain. Inclement weather limited the use of air support and naval gunfire.

The troops began to push up the valleys to climb the high ridges they had to cross to get to Chichagof Harbor. They first encountered the Japanese as they ascended.

From well-camouflaged positions on the ridges, determined Japanese troops poured machinegun and mortar fire on the advancing Americans. The attacks rapidly turned into bitter yard-by-yard fights. Poor

weather prevented effective air and naval gunfire support. Reinforcements from the 4th Infantry Regiment of the Alaska Defense Command joined the 7th ID on Attu, bringing the U.S. strength to 15,000. MG Brown was relieved on 16 May. MG Eugene M. Landrum replaced him. It took two weeks for the infantrymen to gain the high ground overlooking Chichagof Harbor. On 29 May, between 700 and 1,000 Japanese troops staged a last-ditch "Banzai" charge against the American positions. In the wild melee that followed, the Japanese were wiped out to the man.¹⁹ This ended organized resistance, although mop-up operations continued for several days. The bloody battle of Attu was over, but the nature of the fight would affect future Allied operations.



A 7th Infantry Division field hospital on Attu. The high number of casualties suffered during the Battle of Attu, affected Allied planning for Kiska. The majority of the casualties were due to cold weather exposure.



7th U.S. Infantry Division SSI



4th U.S. Infantry Regiment DUI



Forcemen training in seven-man rubber boats at Camp Bradford, Virginia. In the invasion of Kiska, the Forcemen used rubber boats to infiltrate the island.

The American troops on Attu reported 2,351 enemy dead. Only 28 Japanese surrendered. American casualties were 549 killed, 1,148 wounded, and about 2,100 were put out of action by disease and injury, mostly trench-foot.²⁰ Only the battle of Iwo Jima surpassed Attu in terms of the rate of casualties sustained by the American forces. This costly battle impacted the American approach to taking Kiska. The need for units better trained to fight in the harsh environments caused the First Special Service Force to be ordered to the Aleutians.

In March 1943, prior to the battle of Attu, the Force was still training at Fort Harrison, Montana. Two months before, COL Frederick visited MG Buckner at the Alaska Defense Command headquarters at Fort Richardson. Buckner asked the Army staff to assign the FSSF to him for the upcoming campaign, but LTG Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Allied commander in the Mediterranean, wanted the FSSF for Operation HUSKY, the invasion of Sicily.²¹ The Army General Staff decreed that prior to being committed to any theater, the FSSF would undergo amphibious training in April and May, and then be evaluated by the Army Ground Forces (AGF) command. Still unassigned, the Force marked the end of its training at Fort Harrison with a parade in downtown Helena on 6 April 1943. On 11 April they boarded five trains headed east to Virginia.²²

Camp Bradford near Virginia Beach, Virginia, was the home of the Naval Amphibious School, (now the Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek). Army units destined for the European Theater cycled through for amphibious training. There the Forcemen learned how to board various Navy landing craft and how to exit when the vessel hit the beach. The USS *Neversail*, the concrete landing craft mock-up, was used for learning boarding techniques. The well-trained, cohesive Forcemen set records for the speed with which they could climb fully-loaded down the cargo nets into the landing craft.



Soldiers in the close quarters of a U.S. troopship. The Forcemen, double-bunked four high on two Liberty ships, suffered considerably during the stormy passage to the Aleutians.

Training in the use of small rubber boats (similar to today's RB-7s) to infiltrate ahead of the landing craft was part of the program. After Camp Bradford, the FSSF moved to Burlington, Vermont for their unit evaluation.

At nearby Camp Ethan Allen, the Force was tested on its individual and unit proficiency by the staff of the XIII Corps in accordance with AGF policy for units scheduled for overseas deployment.²³ In conjunction with the evaluation, the FSSF received some new American volunteers, did more rubber boat training on Lake Champlain, and polished their raiding and reconnaissance skills. The unit set extremely high standards in virtually every area, and passed with flying colors. They were ready for deployment to North Africa. The movement order finally came on 9 June 1943, but it was for the Aleutians and the invasion of Kiska.

The heavy casualties on Attu convinced RADM Kinkaid that he needed additional ground forces to invade Kiska. In concert with LTG Dewitt, the request was sent to GEN Marshall, who offered the First Special Service Force for inclusion in the invasion force. MG Buckner heartily endorsed the addition of the FSSF, and after completing their evaluations, the Force loaded trains for the West Coast, departing Burlington

on 26 June. On 3 July they reached San Francisco where they prepared for the voyage to Alaska.

The 2,460-man Force sailed for the Aleutians on 11 July after drawing winter clothing and equipment. One of the lessons learned on Attu was the need for adequate raingear, boots, and sleeping bags to deal with the cold, wet conditions on the islands. Canadian Private (PVT) Jack Callowhill of 1st Company, Second Regiment recalled, "We got our winter issue on the boat.



A Forceman cleans his M-1 rifle in a Bell tent on Amchitka. His knee-high shoepacs and the improvised boardwalk helped to traverse the soft muskeg of the island.

The mukluks were just the thing for the muskeg.”²⁴ The Force Headquarters, Second Regiment, and the Service Battalion travelled in the Liberty ship SS *John B. Floyd*. A sister ship, the SS *Nathaniel Wyeth* carried the First and Third Regiments. Liberty Ships were designed for cargo, and when converted for use as troop transport, proved slow and uncomfortable.²⁵ The eleven-day voyage was a memorable one.

Shortly after the convoy cleared San Francisco Bay it encountered a storm that battered the ships unmercifully for four days. PVT Thomas O’Brien, 5th Company, Second Regiment said, “I was one of those who got sick on that trip, and did I ever. It was rough as hell. I never got out of my bunk for five days. That’s how rough it was. I think ninety percent of the guys were sick.”²⁶ Sergeant (SGT) Kenneth Betts, 1st Company, Second Regiment recalled the chaos below decks. “On our Liberty ships, the bunks were stacked eight or ten high. We were packed in there like sardines and we were rolling so violently that the bunks were torn right off the wall. It was a hell of a mess.”²⁷ PVT Kenneth Gay, 3rd Company, First Regiment, said “They had welded those bunks in and the rolling just broke the frames.”²⁸ It was with undisguised relief that the Forcemen saw Adak Island on 23 July.

Five Army infantry regiments were already training on Adak Island. Frederick determined that there was not room enough for the FSSF and the next day the unit sailed to Amchitka, 40 miles east of Kiska, and established a bivouac site on the island.²⁹ The troops quickly became acquainted with the vagaries of the Aleutian weather and terrain. PVT Harvey Watts of 4th Company, Third Regiment remembered how difficult it was to walk on the spongy, water-logged tundra. “You would sink up to your knees with each step. The mud could pull your boots off.”³⁰ Ironically, most of the Army units had the Weasel, which proved to be ideal for negotiating the soggy muskeg. The Force, for whom the Weasel was originally designed, had not brought theirs. Once ashore, the men found that establishing bivouac sites was a labor intensive exercise.

The Force erected their pyramid-shaped Bell tents, two per nine-man section, out on the tundra. PVT Jack Callowhill said, “We rolled back the muskeg and dug down to the bedrock. Then we drove our tent pegs into the volcanic rock.”³¹ The men settled into a three-week routine of training and waiting for the start of operations. Some of the cagey Forcemen supplemented



In order to pitch their Bell tents in the tundra, the Forcemen rolled back the muskeg and dug down to the volcanic bedrock. They drove their tent pegs into the rock to hold the tents up in the nearly continuous heavy winds.

their diet with the local fauna. PVT Kenneth Gay said, “Little streams would run along the ground and disappear under the muskeg. We would carry a line and hook and if you used the pull tab from your cigarette pack, which was red, you could catch these little six-inch trout.”³² Once the bivouac was established, the Force trained hard while waiting impatiently for the start of Operation COTTAGE.

The main assault on Kiska was given to the Amphibian Training Force 9 (ATF-9), known as “Corlett’s Long Knives,” after its commander MG Charles H. Corlett. The First Special Service Force, as the key unit in the ATF, was to lead the initial amphibious assault on the island. For the invasion, ATF-9 was composed of four U.S. infantry regiments, the 17th, 53rd, 87th Mountain and 184th, the Canadian 13th Infantry Brigade and a detachment of the U.S. Alaska Scouts, (2 officers and 18 enlisted men) along with the 2,460-man First Special Service Force. ATF-9 had more than 34,400 men, three times the estimated 11,000 Japanese on the island.³³

A powerful naval task force was supporting the Kiska invasion. RADM Kinkaid had three battleships, the USS *Pennsylvania* (BB-38), *Idaho* (BB-42), and *Tennessee* (BB-43), the heavy cruiser, USS *Portland* (CA-33), the light cruiser *Santa Fe* (CL-60), and seven destroyers available.³⁴ Two fast attack transports, the *Heywood* (AP-12), and the *J. Franklin*



ATF-9, “Corlett’s Long Knives,” SSI
(Courtesy Ken Joyce)



Alaska Defense
Command SSI



17th U.S. Infantry
Regiment DUI



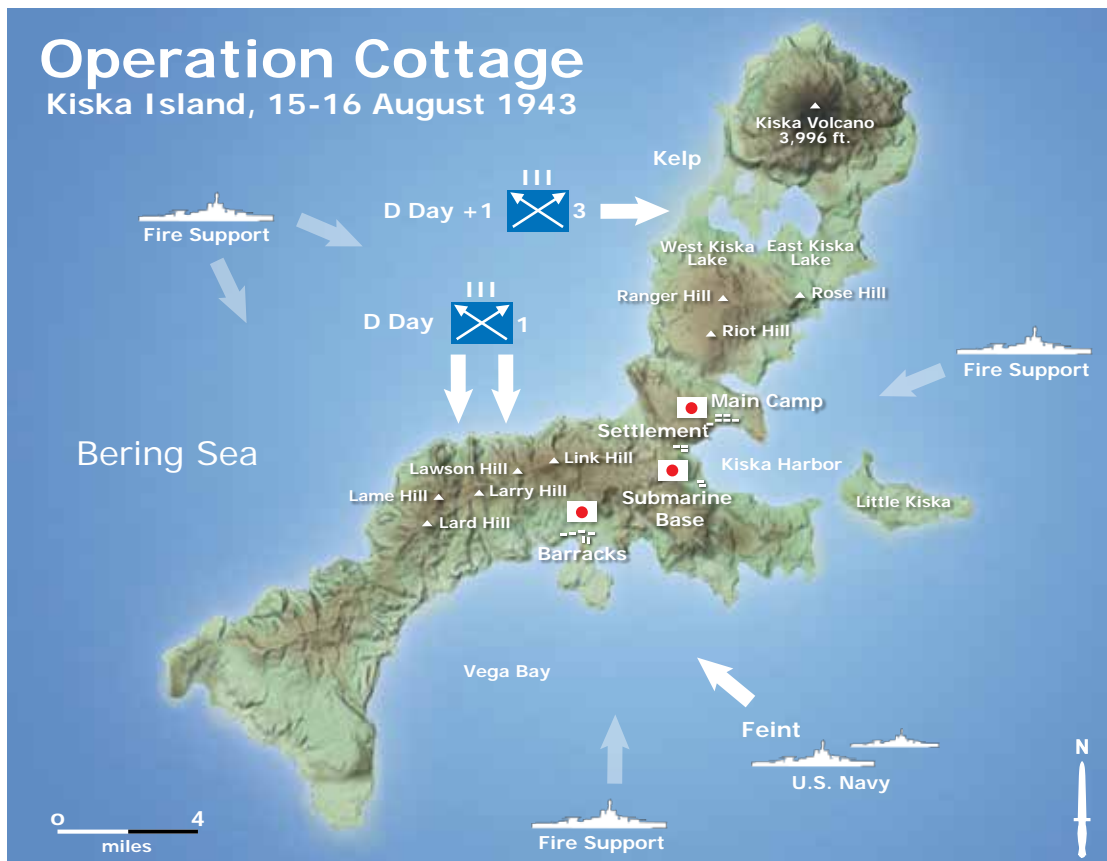
87th Mountain
Infantry Regiment
DUI



184th U.S. Infantry
Regiment DUI

Operation Cottage

Kiska Island, 15-16 August 1943



The First Special Service Force was the lead element of the landing forces for both the Northern and Southern Sectors in the invasion of Kiska. The First and Third Regiments landed in rubber boats to secure the beaches and patrol inland before the main landing forces arrived.



Men of the First Regiment command group huddle on Beach 9-Blue on D-Day 15 August 1943. The white triangular shape behind the men is a beach marking panel erected to guide the subsequent waves of troops to the beach.

Bell (AP-16) carried the soldiers of the landing force.

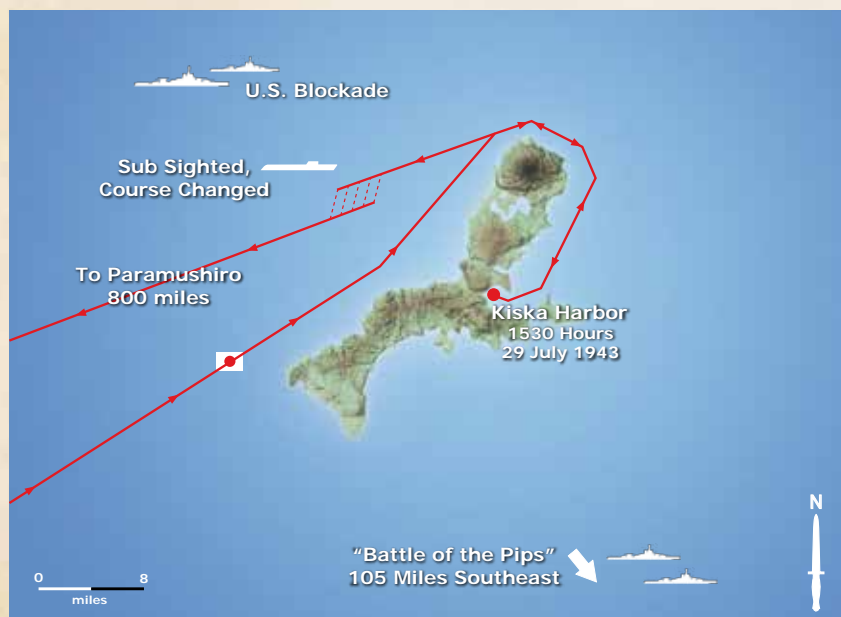
The concept of Operation COTTAGE involved amphibious landings at two locations named the Northern and the Southern Sector on the 22-mile long island. On D-Day, the first landings would be in the Southern Sector. The First Regiment, FSSF, under Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Alfred C. Marshall would infiltrate by rubber boats on the west side of the island. The Force would secure the landing beaches for the U.S. 184th and 17th Infantry Regiments. On D+1, the FSSF Third Regiment, led by LTC Edwin A. Walker would land in rubber boats farther north and secure the beachhead for the U.S. 87th Mountain Infantry

Regiment and the Canadian 13th Infantry Brigade.³⁵ The two landing forces would conduct a pincer movement aimed at the main Japanese base at Kiska Harbor on the east side of the island. The U.S. 53rd Infantry Regiment and the Second Regiment, FSSF were in reserve. The second Regiment's Forcemen were at the airfield on Amchitka, ready to parachute on Kiska to reinforce either sector as needed. A key part of the operation was a feint by a naval task force on the eastern side of the island to draw the Japanese away from the western landing beaches. D-Day was set for 15 August.

Three weeks prior to the invasion the Allies began a daily bombardment of Kiska from the air and sea. The Eleventh Air Force stepped up their bombing campaign and by the time of the landings had dropped 425 tons of bombs on the island. The naval task force added another 330 tons of explosives during their shelling of Kiska before the assault.³⁶ The marked slackening of Japanese anti-aircraft fires at the end of July was attributed to the effectiveness of the bombardment.³⁷ The invasion commenced on 15 August under a heavy naval bombardment.

The First Regiment and COL Frederick's command group boarded the destroyer USS *Kane* and one Landing Ship, Tank (LST) late in the day on 13 August. The Third Regiment rode in a single LST. The three vessels joined the main convoy sailing from Adak to be in position for their assault on Kiska at midnight on the 15th. The First Regiment with their attached team of Alaska Scouts pushed away from the Navy vessels at 0030 hours and began the arduous two-mile paddle against the current.

THE JAPANESE EVACUATION OF KISKA ISLAND



Rear Admiral Masatomi Kimura's naval task force slipped through the allied blockade around Kiska and evacuated the Japanese forces on the island. Using the treacherous northern approach, the task force used the heavy fog to cover its movement. In 55 minutes all 5,200 troops were on board and the Japanese retraced their route safely through the blockade.

The Japanese Navy's undetected evacuation of the Aleutian Island of Kiska was a testament to the patience, seamanship, and luck of Rear Admiral (RADM) Masatomi Kimura. The Allied recapture of Attu Island in May 1943 had cut the Kiska garrison off making the defense of the Aleutians untenable. The Japanese Imperial General Staff decided to evacuate the island.¹

A Japanese attempt to reinforce its garrisons on the islands before Attu was invaded failed. A strong naval force under Vice Admiral Boshiro Hosogaya was stopped when RADM Charles H. McMorris prevailed against the superior Japanese force at the Battle of the Komandorski Islands on 23 March 1943.² From that point, the Japanese faced an Allied blockade and were forced to resupply their forces by submarine. After Attu fell, submarines were dispatched to Kiska to evacuate the garrison. On 23 June 1943, the loss of several submarines caused the Japanese to seek an alternative. Only 820 of the 5,200-man garrison were rescued by submarine. Numerous submarines were sunk while returning to Japan.³ The Imperial General Staff decided to switch to surface ships. This high-risk mission was given to Rear Admiral Masatomi Kimura, a veteran of operations in the North Pacific.

On 11 June 1943 RADM Kimura was given command of the First Destroyer squadron. From his base on Paramushiro Island in the Japanese Kurile Islands, Kimura led a force of two light cruisers and ten destroyers, including the *Shimakaze*, the newest Japanese model and the only one equipped with radar.⁴ The Japanese admiral planned to use the persistent fog in the Aleutians to

screen his passage through the Allied naval blockade. He and his veteran destroyer captains rehearsed sailing formations under strict radio silence as much as their severe fuel restrictions allowed and waited for the weather to cooperate. Kimura planned to approach Kiska from the north instead of the traditional southern route. The northern route was fraught with uncharted shoals and rocks making navigation difficult. A 7 July attempt was aborted when the fog dissipated. On 21 July, the task force steamed out of Paramushiro on the 800 mile voyage to Kiska. Critical fuel shortages dictated that this would be the final evacuation attempt.

On Kiska, the troops assembled nightly at Kiska Harbor to await their rescue. Some marched more than five miles each night over the tundra, only to trudge back before daybreak. Many made this journey eight times, and morale was low. On 28 July, after his final refueling point 500 miles southwest of Kiska, Admiral Kimura began his stealthy approach. In a phenomenal stroke of luck, the American destroyers

on blockade were lured away to chase a "phantom fleet" (the "Battle of the Pips," pips referring to radar contacts). Then they were sent 105 miles southeast of their normal blockade position to refuel. In thick fog, Kimura's fleet slipped through the blockade and negotiated the treacherous northern approach. The ships dropped anchor in Kiska Harbor at 1530 hours on the 29 July 1943.

Alerted to their impending rescue, the garrison troops had been hastily summoned to the pickup point at Kiska Harbor six hours ahead of schedule. In their haste, food, weapons, and clothing were abandoned. Men streamed in from all points on the island. Ten landing craft on the island, supplemented by twelve brought by the task force immediately began ferrying the troops out to the ships. In an incredible time, just 55 minutes, 5,183 men were loaded and the fleet backtracked around the northern tip of Kiska and steamed for Paramushiro. They arrived safely on 1 August.⁵ So stealthy was the fog-enshrouded operation that the Allied Air Force and Navy continued to bomb the unoccupied island until the invasion on 15 August. Audacity, weather, and luck had brought good fortune the Japanese; a disaster was averted on Kiska.

Endnotes

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They headed for their landing site at Quisling Cove (designated Beach 9-Blue). Coming ashore at 0120 hours, the Force men moved quickly to secure the other two landing beaches around Quisling Cove. They set up colored panels and lamps to mark the landing zones for the Southern Sector follow-on forces, scheduled to land at 0630 hours. The other Southern Sector landing beaches were 9-Yellow and 10-Scarlet (Lily Beach). Once the beaches were secure, the Force companies moved cautiously inland to establish defensive positions on the high ground overlooking the center of the island.

A line of hills dominated the approach to Kiska

Harbor. The hills, named Link Hill, Lawson Hill, Larry Hill, and Lame Hill in the operations order, varied in height from 1,300 to 1,500 feet. 1st and 4th Companies seized Larry Hill, 2nd and 3rd Companies moved along Limpid Creek to occupy Lame Hill, while 5th and 6th Companies secured Lily Beach and ascended Link Hill.³⁸ The companies dug in and sent out reconnaissance patrols to locate the Japanese. The Force headquarters followed the First Regiment with some difficulty.

COL Frederick and his headquarters element were to paddle in to Quisling Cove behind the initial landing wave. Two of the small rubber boats, overloaded with

Forcemen rest and clean weapons following a patrol on Kiska. Despite the fact that the Japanese had evacuated the island before the invasion, the Force patrols were at risk from the overzealous Allied units that landed behind them.





Allied forces landing after the First Special Service Force had secured the beaches.

communications equipment and generators, were barely afloat in the icy sea. The men could make no headway against the ebbing tide. They were carried helplessly out to sea where they drifted until picked up by a Navy minesweeper at dawn.³⁹ Frederick and his depleted headquarters landed at Beach 9-Blue on the heels of First Regiment. The main body of the Southern Sector landing force under the command of COL E. M. Sutherland began to come ashore at Quisling Cove shortly after dawn.

At 0620 hours the first elements of the 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment and the 17th Infantry Regiment waded ashore from the landing craft at the three beaches. Troops continued to arrive throughout the day and by evening, 6,500 men were on the island and the Southern Sector beachhead was secure. The Force units continued to push patrols out and guided the infantry to their defensive positions on the ridgeline. The Forcemen moved carefully as jittery American infantry tended to fire at the slightest provocation. Mindful that the Japanese on Attu had not revealed themselves until the Allied

terrain than the units in the Southern Sector. The northern end of the island was dominated by the 4,000-foot Kiska volcano. East and West Kiska Lakes blocked the southern route to Kiska Harbor. South of the lakes was a trio of hills, Riot, Ranger, and Rose, rising nearly 1,400 feet across the center of the island. If the Japanese defended the high ground, they would be difficult to dislodge.

Shortly after midnight on 16 August, the Third Regiment loaded their rubber boats and began the mile-long pull in to the island. The Navy planners indicated that the landing area for the Third Regiment was a shingle beach and a good landing site, an assessment that proved to be false. Getting in to the beach proved difficult for the soldiers. PVT Harvey Watts of 4th company recalled, "We had trouble paddling through the seaweed to get to the beach."⁴⁰ Once through the thick kelp, the men encountered a beach strewn with huge boulders.

The first units ashore struggled getting the rubber boats across the spit of land. PVT Richard Hilton of 2nd Company said, "The rocks were big, 10-12 feet high and we were afraid they could be mined."⁴¹ One of Third Regiment's missions was to send an element across West Kiska Lake to secure the area at the base of Ranger Hill. This required the men to carry their rubber boats from the beach across a narrow spit of land and re-launch them for the journey across the lake.

First Lieutenant (1LT) T. Mark Radcliffe's platoon of 1st Company was the first to launch their boats in the lake for the two-mile paddle to their objective. Once on the lake, the men began their stealthy movement towards the far shore. The already tense situation was further exacerbated when the cloud cover that shielded their movement began to break up. 1LT Radcliffe said "We hadn't seen the sun or the moon for a month and a half. When we were right in the middle of this lake, the bright, bright moon came out."⁴² Exposed and helpless out on the water, the Forcemen paddled furiously for the landing site.



An artist's rendition of 1LT Mark Radcliffe's platoon paddling across West Kiska Lake. During the crossing, the clouds parted and the men were silhouetted in the moonlight.

The Japanese 2-man midget submarines on Kiska. PVT Kenneth Gay's platoon was detailed to guard the facility against the souvenir hunting GIs.



Reaching the far side of the lake, the 1st Company beached their boats and moved up the slope of Ranger Hill. Coming off the lake, the men encountered increasingly strong winds. Radcliffe said, "When we got up to the beach area, the wind picked up. It was blowing so hard, it was blowing guys with their loaded packs right over. That place was horrendous."⁴³ By 0300, the Third Regiment units were digging in along the ridge between Ranger and Riot Hills. At dawn on the 16th, the U.S. 184th Infantry Regiment, the Canadian 13th Brigade and other support units, including Navy Seabees (Engineers) began coming ashore in the north and heading inland. Still, the Force had encountered no Japanese; it was becoming obvious that the enemy had left.

On the 16 August 1943, at approximately 1000, Force patrols from the Northern and Southern Sectors converging on the main Japanese Camp at Kiska Harbor, confirmed that there were no enemy troops on Kiska. Frederick, who had followed the Third Regiment ashore, sent word to the Second Regiment on Amchitka. The pre-arranged coded message was "Baby needs a new pair of shoes." For the men of the Second Regiment, on alert on the Amchitka airfield on 15 and 16 August, that meant they would not get to jump.⁴⁴

PVT Jack Callowhill said, "Everyone was on the airstrip. We had a rigger section [from the FSSF Service Battalion] and about 600 jumpers. We had 24 airplanes [C-47's] and we were in 25-man sticks. We were on the aircraft for 20 minutes, then everyone got off and we layed down on the runway [still wearing parachutes]. We did this for a couple of hours on the 16th, and then they called it off."⁴⁵ By then, troops were combing Kiska for any sign of the Japanese.

PVT Charley Mann was with the 4th Company, Third Regiment. "There were lots of vehicles on the island. The Japanese were using Ford trucks, 1936 to 1939 vintage. I did see a wooden Japanese landing craft and a couple of anti-aircraft weapons."⁴⁶ On Kiska, the Japanese had established a base for their three midget submarines, including a marine railway for launching and recovering the small subs. PVT Kenneth Gay and his platoon were sent to guard the submarine facility at Kiska Harbor and to prevent GIs roaming the island from stripping the vessels. "There was one of the midget subs in dry dock, and we pulled guard on it," said Ken Gay.⁴⁷ The Force was sent to some of the nearby islands to check for the Japanese.

On the 16th, the First Regiment minus the 1st Battalion searched Little Kiska Island at the mouth of Kiska Harbor. On the 17th, the 1st Battalion, First Regiment was sent to search Segula Island, twelve miles northwest of Kiska



Men of the Second Regiment on Amchitka wait beneath their C-47 aircraft. The Second Regiment was the Force reserve and was prepared to conduct a parachute assault onto Kiska to reinforce the invasion.



Japanese forces on the island left behind most of their equipment when they abandoned Kiska on 29 July 1943. This anti-aircraft gun was one of several still on the island when the FSSF landed on 15 August.

after an aircraft reported the possible presence of the Japanese. They found the bodies of two fur trappers who had starved to death some years before.⁴⁸ Three days after landing, the Force was pulled off the island.



A Forceman in an abandoned Japanese defensive position on Kiska aims a Type 96 light machinegun. The hurried Japanese evacuation meant a wealth of souvenirs for the occupying troops.



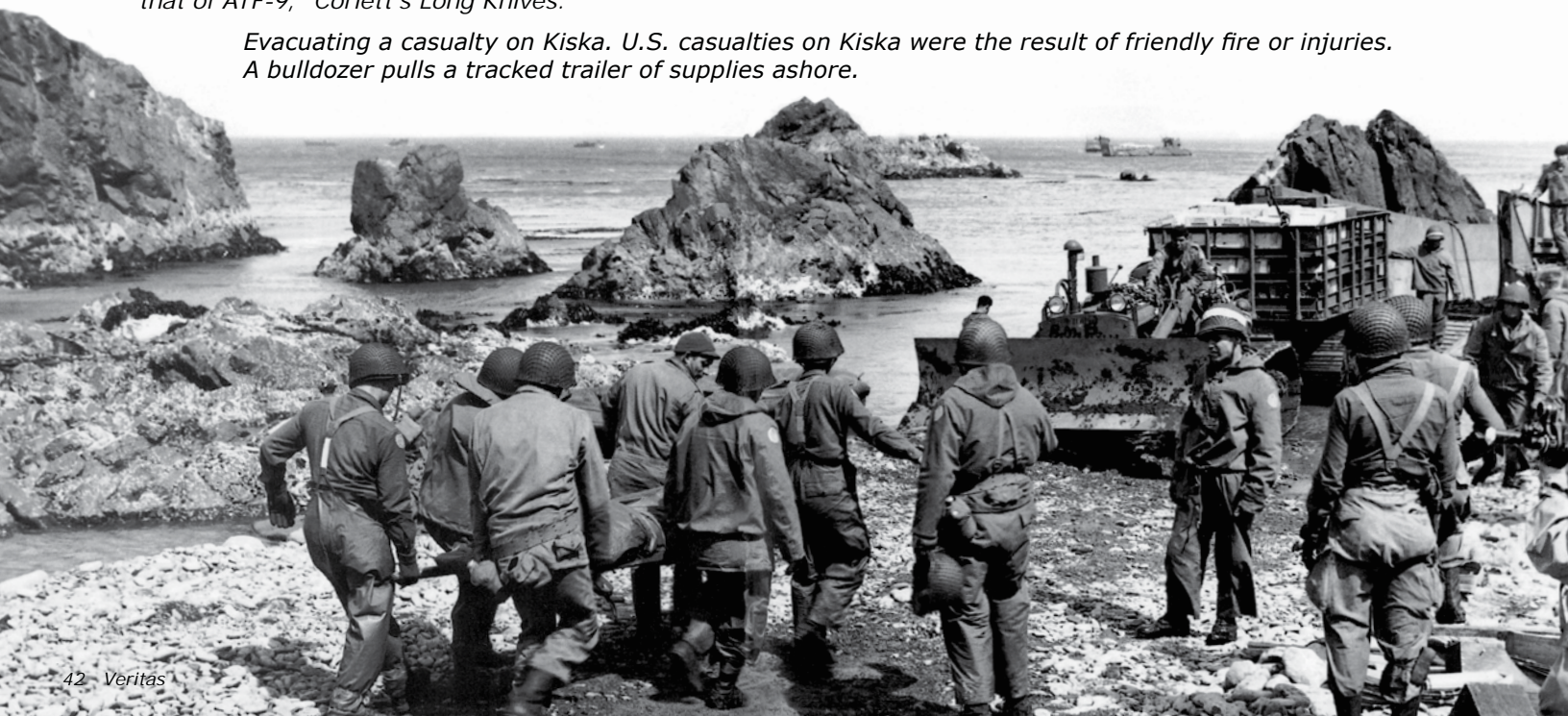
Two Forcemen examine a Japanese Type 89 50mm grenade launcher, known to the GI's as a "knee mortar," found during a patrol on Kiska. The man on the right is wearing both the First Special Service Force patch and that of ATF-9, "Corlett's Long Knives."

On 18 August 1943, COL Frederick received a message: "HIGHEST AUTHORITY DIRECTS THAT YOU RETURN SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE TO SAN FRANCISCO WITHOUT DELAY—NIMITZ."⁴⁹ The First and Third Regiments boarded the transport *J. Franklin Bell* that had just discharged troops and supplies of the 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment at Kiska, and sailed to Adak, arriving on 19 August. The Second Regiment and the Service Battalion broke down the Amchitka camp and loaded all Force equipment on the *John B. Floyd*, which also sailed to Adak. The troops on the *Floyd* transferred personnel and equipment to the transport *Heywood*. The *Bell* departed Adak on 23 August with the *Heywood* sailing a day later. Unlike the journey north, the return voyage was swift and uneventful and the *Bell* arrived in San Francisco on 30 August followed by the *Heywood* on 1 September.⁵⁰

The Force disembarked at Camp Stoneman, on the Sacramento River in Pittsburg, CA, where most of the cold-weather equipment was turned in. "We gave back all our winter gear. We never got those mukluks back," said PVT Richard Hilton wistfully.⁵¹ The Force had orders for Europe. Following a short period of leave and more training at Camp Ethan Allen, Vermont, the unit boarded the *Empress of Scotland*, a converted luxury liner, at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia on 28 October 1943, bound for Casablanca, Morocco.

The Aleutians "dry run" gave the Force a shakedown that no training program could have accomplished. The FSSF proved it was a highly-trained, well-disciplined combat unit that could accomplish its mission despite the adversities of extreme weather and terrain. They later demonstrated their combat capabilities during fierce fighting in the mountains of Italy, at Anzio, and later in southern France. ♠

Evacuating a casualty on Kiska. U.S. casualties on Kiska were the result of friendly fire or injuries. A bulldozer pulls a tracked trailer of supplies ashore.



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Endnotes

- 1 The First Special Service Force is one of the most well-documented units in World War II. Numerous books have been written about the Force, including a number of recent studies. While not a complete compendium of books about the Force, the following volumes represent the majority of the most current works. Robert H. Adleman and George Walton, *The Devil's Brigade* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1966); Robert D. Burhans, *The First Special Service Force: A Canadian/American Wartime Alliance, The Devil's Brigade* (Dalton, GA: Lee Printing Company, 1947); Anne Hicks, *The Last Fighting General: The Biography of Robert Tryon Frederick* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 2006); Kenneth H. Joyce, *Snow Plough and the Jupiter Deception* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2006); John Nadler, *A Perfect Hell: The Forgotten Story of the Canadian Commandos of the Second World War* (Scarborough, Ontario: Doubleday Canada, 2005); Mark J. Nelson, *With the Black Devils: A Soldier's World War II Account with the First Special Service Force and the 82nd Airborne* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2004); Robert Todd Ross, *The Supercommandos: First Special Service Force, 1942-1944, An Illustrated History* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2000); Joseph A. Springer, *The Black Devil Brigade, The True Story of the First Special Service Force: An Oral History* (Pacifica, CA: Pacifica Military History, 2001); James A. Wood, *We Move Only Forward: Canada, The United States and the First Special Service Force, 1942-1944* (St. Catharines, Ontario, Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2006).
- 2 The smelting of aluminum and manganese, and the processing of bauxite were heavily dependent on the electricity produced by these hydro-electric dams. Joyce, *Snow Plough and the Jupiter Deception*, 28.
- 3 The initial Canadian contingent for the First Special Service Force was 52 Officers and 847 enlisted men. While evenly dispersed throughout the Force, the Canadians as a group were called the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion in matters of national administration. The Canadian strength would decrease throughout the life of the FSSF, because no replacements came from the Canadian Army. Joyce, *Snow Plough and the Jupiter Deception*, 65.
- 4 Burhans *The First Special Service Force*, 22; Ross, *The Supercommandos*, 48-49.
- 5 At Fort Harrison, the First Special Service Force was supported by an eight-man aviation detachment. The detachment was disbanded in June, 1943 in Vermont, prior to the unit's movement to the Aleutians. In March, 1944, the FSSF acquired the Ranger Cannon Company when the Rangers were disbanded after Anzio. The Cannon Company had half-tracks mounting 75mm howitzers and supported the Force in Italy and France. The photographs in this article are largely the products of the Force's organic photographic section. Ross, *The Supercommandos*, 49.
- 6 After a production run of 600, Studebaker modified the T-15 vehicle by moving the engine from the rear to the front. It was redesignated the T-24. In its standardized form, it was fielded as the Cargo Carrier, Light, M-24. The Force never received their required allotment of the vehicle. Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 6, 23, 43.
- 7 A combination of factors including the impact of denying the electricity to the Norwegian civilian population, inadequate heavy airlift to carry the Weasels, the lack of a viable extraction plan for the men, and competition with a similar British-Norwegian plan resulted in the cancellation of PLOUGH. Joyce, *Snow Plough and the Jupiter Deception*, 90; Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 35.
- 8 Joyce, *Snow Plough and the Jupiter Deception*, 92.
- 9 Joyce, *Snow Plough and the Jupiter Deception*, 94.
- 10 David C. Evans, ed., *The Japanese Navy in World War II: In the Words of Former Japanese Naval Officers* (Annapolis, MD, Naval Institute Press, 1986), 245.
- 11 Lieutenant Commander John Tatom, USN, *Summer Fogs and Winter Winds of the Aleutian Islands and How to Fly Despite Them*, Fleet Air Wing Four Manual, 1943, <http://www.hlswilliwaw.com/aleutians/Aleutians/html/summerfogs-winterwinds.htm>.
- 12 Louis Morton, *The United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific, Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), 421.
- 13 Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engelman and Byron Fairchild, *The United States Army in World War II, The Western Hemisphere: Guarding the United States and Its Outposts* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1964), 266-268; Morton, *The United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific*, 478.
- 14 Morton, *The United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific*, 421.
- 15 Morton, *The United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific*, 423.
- 16 Admiral William F. Halsey's four most important assets were the submarine, radar, airplanes, and the bulldozer. Halsey, 1947, quoted in "Radar Returns", Vol 2. No. 4, Spring 1987, <http://www.radarreturns.net.au/assets/issues/RR%20Vol2%20No4.pdf>.
- 17 George L. MacGarrigle, *Aleutians: The US Army Campaigns of World War II*, CMH Pub 72-6, (Washington DC, Center of Military History, 2003), 16-17.
- 18 MacGarrigle, *Aleutians*, 18.
- 19 Conn, Engelman, and Fairchild, *The United States Army in World War II, The Western Hemisphere*, 279-295.
- 20 MacGarrigle, *Aleutians*, 19.
- 21 Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 52; Albert N. Garland and Howard McGaw Smyth, *The United States Army in World War II, Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1965), 5.
- 22 Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 53.
- 23 Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 57.
- 24 John E. Callowhill, 1st Company, Second Regiment, First Special Service Force, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 19 January 2008, Kissimmee, FL, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 25 The 225 Liberty Ships built during World War II were designed as cargo carriers. The conversion to troop carrier use was necessitated by the need for more troop transport. Inadequate facilities for accommodating large numbers of troops made a voyage in the Liberty ship a trying experience. Charles Wardlow, *The United States Army in World War II, The Transportation Corps: Movement, Training, and Supply* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1956), 145-148.
- 26 Springer, *The Black Devil Brigade*, 55.
- 27 Springer, *The Black Devil Brigade*, 55.
- 28 Kenneth Gay, 1st Company, Third Regiment, First Special Service Force, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 19 January 2008, Kissimmee, FL, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 29 Hicks, *The Last Fighting General*, 89; Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 65.
- 30 Harvey Watts, 4th Company, Third Regiment, First Special Service Force, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, Fort Bragg, NC, 14 September 2000, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files.
- 31 Callowhill interview.
- 32 Gay interview.
- 33 Ross, *The Supercommandos*, 55.
- 34 Department of the Navy, United States Navy Combat Narrative, "The Aleutians Campaign, June 1942-August 1943, (Washington DC: Naval Historical Center, 1993), <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/USN-CN-Aleutians.html>.
- 35 Stanley W. Dziuban, *The United States Army in World War II, Military Relations Between the United States and Canada, 1939-1945*, (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1959), 258.
- 36 Morton, *The United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific*, 423.
- 37 There had been mounting evidence that the Japanese had evacuated the island despite some pilot reports of receiving ground fire right up to the date of the invasion. This most likely resulted from the aircraft flying too close to exploding bomb debris on low-level runs over the island. Ross, *The Supercommandos*, 58.
- 38 Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 72-73; Ross, *The Supercommandos*, 61-63.
- 39 Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 74; Ross, *The Supercommandos*, 62.
- 40 Watts interview.
- 41 Richard Hilton, 2nd Company, Third Regiment, First Special Service Force, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 19 January 2008, Kissimmee, FL, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 42 Springer, *The Black Devil Brigade*, 59.
- 43 Springer, *The Black Devil Brigade*, 59.
- 44 Ross, *The Supercommandos*, 70.
- 45 Callowhill interview.
- 46 Charles Mann, 4th Company, Third Regiment, First Special Service Force, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 19 January 2008, Kissimmee, FL, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 47 Gay interview.
- 48 Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 82; Ross, *The Supercommandos*, 70.
- 49 Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 82; Ross, *The Supercommandos*, 70.
- 50 Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, 84; Ross, *The Supercommandos*, 71.
- 51 Hilton interview.



Creating A Demigod:

Nazi Art, Adolf Hitler,
and the Cult of
Personality.

by Robert W. Jones, Jr.

*Hubert Lanzinger's allegorical
portrait "The Standard Bearer"
(Der Bannerträger).*



The Führer, Adolf Hitler, portrayed as the military leader of Germany.

on a “Cult of Personality,” glorifies the leaders of totalitarian regimes and plays an important part in building up a national figure. Perhaps the most intense example is the artwork promulgated by Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Party. While the topic of Nazi art may seem repugnant, it is a classic study of art used as propaganda. Located in Washington DC is a unique collection of such propaganda, specifically from the Nazis of World War II. This article provides a short historical summary on the rise of Nazi Germany and then shows examples of the regime’s artwork currently in the Art Collection at the U.S. Army Center for Military History.¹ “Artwork” covers many mediums, from architecture and design to film, painting, and sculpture; however, paintings are the focus of this article.

Germany’s loss in World War I and the onerous provisions of the Treaty of Versailles provided the breeding ground for widespread discontent. Until October 1918, the Imperial German government controlled all news media. Propaganda extolled the fighting capabilities of the individual soldier and the country’s victories over the western Allies. Suddenly, the government announced an armistice in October 1918, which was in effect a surrender.

This act caused turmoil amongst the people. While many Germans agreed with the armistice, they did not believe that they were losing the war and they did not believe that Germany had started the war. A negotiated peace settlement was expected after the signing of the armistice. However, the Allies dictated the terms and Germany was not invited to Versailles. The common belief was that the army would have won the war if weak-kneed politicians had not “stabbed the country in the back” (*Dolchstoß*) by settling for an armistice.² The Allies blamed Germany for the war and sought heavy reparations for reconstruction. The humiliation of Versailles tainted the postwar democratic Weimar government from its very beginnings. The Nazi Party exploited these popular views to explain postwar hardships.

Between 1918 and 1923, Weimar Germany was plagued by severe internal crises. From both the left and the right came assassinations, anti-government propaganda, and popular revolts (*putsches* in German). The already weakened war-damaged economy could not recover; reparations and hyperinflation prevented reconstruction. The period between 1918 and 1923, is described by

“Cult of Personality”

The “cult of personality” is built around a heroic leader. It is especially popular in totalitarian regimes. In Nazi Germany the “cult of personality” emphasized individual dedication and loyalty to the all-powerful leader, who exemplified the “Aryan race.” As the *Führer* (leader) of the Nazi Party, Adolf Hitler used his charisma to get the German people to accept his vision of the future. Art was used to portray him as the benevolent guide (leader), for the nation.

Unless otherwise noted the artwork featured in this article is from the U.S. Army Center for Military History Art Collection. Most of the artists are unknown.

Historically governments have used art as a form of propaganda. Art is usually associated with beauty and inspiration, however totalitarian regimes such as the Nazis, the Soviet Union under Communism, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and more recently North Korea used art as a propaganda medium. Much of the artwork centering



Emphasizing the prevalent despair in Germany in the interwar years, a heroic leader on a white horse rallies the troops while the wounded valiantly struggle to get to their feet.

“The trauma of surrender, economic hardship, and political revolution defined the real world in which most Germans lived. But emotionally they lived in the aftermath of wartime glory ... images of brave soldiers and strong women, hymns to a national spirit, and appeals to sacrifice ... persisted even as reality left them behind. As Germans experienced hunger, fear of invasion, revolution, and economic disaster, they clung to dreams created by wartime propaganda.” Claudia Koonz

Professor Claudia Koonz, *"The trauma of surrender, economic hardship, and political revolution defined the real world in which most Germans lived. But emotionally they lived in the aftermath of wartime glory ... images of brave soldiers and strong women, hymns to a national spirit, and appeals to sacrifice ... persisted even as reality left them behind. As Germans experienced hunger, fear of invasion, revolution, and economic disaster, they clung to dreams created by wartime propaganda."*³

New political parties, both right and left, evolved in the chaos of post-war Germany. The rightist Nazi Party (officially the National Socialist German Workers Party, or in German *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, referred to by the acronym "Nazi"), began with less than a hundred members, but grew rapidly. The Nazi solution to Germany's problems was unification. They emphasized a trinity – the individual, the people and the nation – united together and led by a visionary leader, Adolf Hitler.

Many of the new political parties in Germany had armed auxiliaries. Hitler created the Nazi Party "Gymnastic and Sports Division" to serve as the party's military arm. It was a cover name because the Weimar government was cracking down on paramilitary groups. Later this element became the *Sturmabteilung* (S.A. or Storm Troopers), or "Brown Shirts," because of their brown uniforms.⁴ Oaths



This painting depicts the Nazi Party membership oath ceremony. These often were conducted at night using lights and torches dramatizing the significance of the ritual.



administered during ritualistic ceremonies bonded the membership and insured loyalty to the leader. As the economy continued to deteriorate, the Nazi Party built its strength in the popularly elected Weimar assembly (the *Reichstag*).⁵ This gave them legitimacy in the minds of the people.

In 1932 Hitler ran for the presidency of Germany, coming in second to General Paul von Hindenburg (the WWI military hero). The next year, on 30 January 1933, Adolf Hitler became the Chancellor of a coalition government under the aged von Hindenburg (84 years old, in very poor health, and perhaps in the early

This 1938 postcard celebrates the incorporation of Austria as part of Germany. The caption, "One People, One Country, One Leader" was the primary theme of the Nazi internal campaign.

8 November 1918

Kaiser Wilhelm abdicates.

9 November 1918

The "Weimar Republic" is recognized by the Allies as the democratic government of Germany.

11 November 1918

The armistice is signed.

28 June 1919

The Treaty of Versailles is signed. Germany is forced to accept responsibility for the war. It must pay war reparations, give up its overseas colonies, and reduce the military to an army of 100,000.

1919 - 1923

A period of massive unrest, economic instability, and revolts, from both the right and left, in Germany.

29 July 1921

Adolf Hitler became the head of the Nazi Party.

1923

Hyperinflation drops the exchange rate of the German **Mark** from 18,000 to \$1 in January to 4 billion to \$1 in November.

8 - 9 November 1923

The "Beer Hall **Putsch**" in Munich was a Nazi Party attempt at a **coup d'état**. It was successfully prevented by the army and police. 16 Nazis and 3 policemen are killed.

1924

Adolf Hitler is tried and sentenced to 5 years for the "Beer Hall **Putsch**." In Landsberg prison he writes **Mein Kampf** (My Struggle), part autobiography, part blueprint for a future Germany and the "operator's manual" for the Nazi Party. Released after serving nine months of the five-year sentence, Hitler went on a book tour to promote his book. The new bestseller propelled him into the national spotlight.

October 1929

During the Great Depression Germany was hit particularly hard.

September 1930

Massive popular discontent catapulted the Nazis into prominence. Their elected officials in the **Reichstag** went from 12 to 107 seats.

Summer 1932

Over 6 Million Germans were unemployed.

November 1932

In new national elections, the Nazis take 196 seats in the **Reichstag**.

January 1933

Hitler became Chancellor of Germany.

27 February 1933

The **Reichstag** was burned. The Communists were blamed, which gave Hitler an excuse to seize power through legislation.

March 1933

The "Enabling Act" gave Hitler additional executive powers and suspended some civil liberties.

13 March 1933

The Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda was established. The Nazi Party propaganda chief, Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, was its director.

May 1933

Trade unions in Germany were abolished.

10 May 1933

Massive book burnings took place.

July 1933

All political parties, except the Nazis were banned.

September 1933

The Reich Culture Chamber (**Reichskulturkammer**) was created to control all forms of art in Germany.

June 1934

During the "Night of the Long Knives," Hitler internally purged the Nazi Party. The death of President Hindenburg left a power vacuum.

August 1934

Hitler combined the offices of Chancellor and President after Hindenburg's death.

March 1935

Hitler reinstituted conscription and began to build up the army.



The Rise to Power



Nazi standard at a Beer Hall Putsch Commemoration Ceremony

The Nazi Party developed its own heraldry as a source of identification for its members. Part of the Nazi Party's allure was its regalia (uniforms and symbology). In the summer of 1920 Adolf Hitler designed the party insignia. A hooked cross – the hakenkreuz – an ancient symbol became the Nazi swastika. Rejecting the black, red, and gold colors of the Weimar Republic, Hitler chose a white circle with the black swastika in the center on a red background. The red symbolized the movement, the white represented nationalism, and the swastika reflected the “struggle for the victory of the Aryan man.”¹ For parades and mass meetings Hitler devised standards based on ancient Roman Legion heraldry, with a black metal swastika on top surrounded with a metal wreath, surmounted by an eagle, from which hung a square swastika flag, emblazoned with “Germany Awake! (Deutschland Erwache!).”²

Endnotes

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- 2 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. A History of Nazi Germany*, 43-44.



A German stamp to commemorate the 1923 Munich "Beer Hall Putsch". When the Nazis came to power in 1933, a national holiday was declared. Re-enactments in Munich were conducted on the anniversary date of 9 November.

stages of senility).⁶ On the evening of 27 February 1933 arsonists destroyed the *Reichstag*.⁷ A "half-witted Dutch Communist" pyromaniac and others were arrested, tried, and executed for the crime.⁸ The *Reichstag* fire gave the Nazis an excuse to make a power grab. On 28 February, at Hitler's bequest, President von Hindenburg signed a decree "for the Protection of the People and the State" that suspended many civil liberties within Germany.⁹ By 5 March 1933 the Nazis were the majority party in the *Reichstag*. During the summer of 1933 it became the only legal political party in Germany.

From the creation of the Nazi Party, Adolf Hitler employed sophisticated propaganda. That propaganda apparatus was institutionalized as a government department shortly after Hitler was elected Chancellor on 31 January 1933. On 13 March 1933, he established the Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (*Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* or *Propagandaministerium*).¹⁰ His propaganda chief, Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, was named its minister.¹¹

The *Propagandaministerium* became the largest of all Nazi Ministries. It was charged with controlling public opinion and enforcing Nazi doctrine. In a symbolic move, the new ministry building was placed in a prominent position on the *Wilhelmplatz*, directly across from the new Reich Chancellery building. This emphasized its important place in the hierarchy of the new "Third Reich."¹² The Propaganda Ministry infused Nazi ideology and doctrine into every aspect of daily life. Author Peter Adam explained: "National Socialist [Nazi] doctrine lived in almost every painting, film, stamp, and public building, in the toys of the children, in people's houses, in tales and costumes, in the layout of villages, in the songs and poems taught in schools, even

household goods. The cultural infiltration of every sphere of life never ceased."¹³ Art was an important weapon in the arsenal of the Nazi regime.

The Reich Culture Chamber (*Reichskulturkammer*) of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry controlled German art.¹⁴ Membership was mandatory for all those "who participated in the creation, reproduction, intellectual or technical processing, dissemination, preservation, and sale of cultural goods."¹⁵ All forms of art had to promote Nazi ideology and racial consciousness. The German people were to be portrayed as peaceful or struggling to defend their country.

The Reich Culture Chamber issued licenses to the press, radio, arts, film, literature, and music. All aspects of culture were regulated by the Nazi "stamp of approval." Artists were investigated to ensure racial purity and adherence to Nazi ideals. They faced three choices: follow the Nazi licensing procedures; choose another profession; or flee the country. Party members



"Mai-Feier im Berliner Lustgarten" (*May Holiday in the Berlin Pleasure Garden*). A traditional harvest celebration depicted in the German (Nazi) art pavilion at the 1937 Paris World's Fair. The "maypole" is topped with Nazi flags. While the craft guilds and trade workers march they were being watched by boys in Hitler Youth uniforms. People cheered by rendering the "Nazi arm salute." By Rudolf Hengstenberg.



Under an arch inscribed with "Die Schmiede Grossdeutschland" (The Forge of Greater Germany), workers toil at a blacksmith forge to arm the personification of German womanhood for battle. A swastika keystone tops the archway. The shield is emblazoned with the German Imperial eagle with a swastika in the center. That part was damaged by an unknown Allied soldier. The hem of the woman's cape's is covered in swastikas.

could pursue art as a vocation, but only according to the rules of the Reich Culture Chamber.

Very quickly Nazism became an integral part of everything German. "*Gleichschaltung*," literally meaning "synchronization" or "coordination" was how the Nazi regime systematically established total control over Germans as individuals and how they coordinated all facets of societal life. The span of control covered the gamut from daily living to the economy to the arts.¹⁶

To expand control of Germany, Hitler and Goebbels used art as a propaganda tool. Artistic expression and political goals were combined. As an artist Hitler defined true art as being linked to the country, life, health, and the Aryan race. In a 1935 party speech, Hitler declared, "We shall discover and encourage the artists who are able to impress upon the State of the German people the

... in their origin and in the picture which they present, they are the expressions of the soul and the ideals of the community."

cultural stamp of the Germanic race ... in their origin and in the picture which they present, they are the expressions of the soul and the ideals of the community."¹⁷

Hitler and Goebbels knew the importance of image. The *Führer* (leader) had to be personified as a god-like figure. This was integral to Nazi propaganda. As the party grew in popularity, the "cult of personality" depicting Hitler as Germany's leader grew exponentially.¹⁸ A vigorous national program of artwork featured Hitler as the leader and extolled the mystical strength of the Nazi Party. Painters portrayed



Hubert Lanzinger's allegorical portrait "The Standard Bearer" (Der Bannerträger). Hitler is portrayed as a medieval – probably Teutonic – knight in a suit of silver armor, pure, and unblemished. In his right hand he holds a Nazi flag that is rippling 'heroically' in the wind. Hitler is presented as a superior human being, the almost god-like the personification of the leader and head of the National Socialist Party. This 1938 painting was popularized in posters and postcards. The damage in Hitler's eye was inflicted by an unknown U.S. soldier's bayonet.



The Munich [“Beer Hall”] Putsch, 1923, by Schmitt

*The Nazi Party prepared for revolution.¹ On 9 November 1923, Adolf Hitler used a mass meeting at the Buergerbäukeller beer hall in Munich to begin what became known as the “Beer Hall Putsch.”² After a confrontation with the police, sixteen Nazis and three police were dead or dying, with many others wounded. The subsequent trial of Hitler and nine co-defendants propelled him into the national spotlight. Convicted of treason Hitler would write *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) in Landsberg prison, part autobiography, part blueprint for the future of Germany and the “operator’s manual” for the Nazi Party. Released after serving only nine months of a five-year sentence, Hitler went on a book tour to promote his new book. It became a bestseller and catapulted Hitler into the national limelight.³ The failed coup d’état became a sacred day for the Nazi Party and was commemorated in memorial ceremonies and paintings.⁴ In the center of the painting, Hitler boldly defies the soldiers, while dead and dying comrades lay at his feet. A bright light in the background emphasizes the righteousness of the cause. In reality, Hitler, and most of the Nazi leadership fled the scene as soon as shots were fired. The artist is identified only as “Schmitt.”*

Endnotes

- 1 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. A History of Nazi Germany*, 66-68.
- 2 Sometimes also called the “Munich Putsch; Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. A History of Nazi Germany*, 66-68.
- 3 John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989), 33; Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. A History of Nazi Germany*, 77-79.
- 4 In 1935 as the Chancellor of Germany, Hitler presided over a ceremony placing the sixteen dead in a national shrine.



Nazi Vision of Greatness, by Richard Spitz

The 1933 painting, "Nazi Vision of Greatness," by Richard Spitz capitalizes on religious fervor. Waves of Nazi Brown Shirts, gazing intently ahead, move toward a radiant, sun-like swastika atop a Teutonic castle on the horizon. In the center of the painting, a Brown Shirt, swooning in rapture, collapses. As he is caught by a comrade he is reverently gesturing toward the golden swastika-sun with his right hand. In the center, closest to the sun is the Nazi standard. Nazi flags dot the landscape, fluttering in the wind. In the right foreground are a Hitler Youth, a white bearded distinguished looking grandparent, a farmer, and other workers. Perhaps the most symbolic element in the painting is in the sky, where, amidst storming clouds, the spirits of faithful dead Nazis stream towards the shimmering swastika-sun, their right arms outstretched in the Hitler salute.

All paintings of Adolf Hitler depict him standing to denote strength.

"An artist who wants to render the Führer must be more than an artist. The entire German people and German eternity will stand silently in front of this work, filled with emotions to gain strength from it today and for all times"
(Peter Adam).

him as the healer who would cure all of Germany's problems.

Photographs of Hitler had to receive his personal approval before public release. Art was even more closely scrutinized. The Nazi art magazine, *Die Kunst im Dritten Reich* (Art in the Third Reich) was printed on the best paper to ensure high quality reproductions.¹⁹ Hitler's portrait was usually the cover or the frontis piece of these magazines. Art contests were held throughout Germany. Paintings of the *Führer* were prominent winners. Since artists had to be licensed by the Propaganda Ministry, what better way for an artist to demonstrate solidarity or "good faith" with the party than to paint a portrait of Hitler? While most of the artwork was hung in public galleries, Hitler and Goebbels wanted to spread Nazi art to all levels of society. The German leader was the center piece of Nazi Party themes that became small portraits, busts, posters, postcards, even matchbook covers. These were all meant to inspire the German people and to glorify Hitler as the leader of the country and party.

Works of art and literature that did not fit into the Nazi ideology were labeled "degenerate." Much of the so-called degenerate artwork and books were destroyed. In some cases, they were burned publicly to show political strength. However, a lot ended up in the private art collections and libraries of Nazi Party elite, like Hermann Göring, *Reichsmarschall* (second only to Hitler) and Commander of the German Air Force (*Luftwaffe*).

Throughout the life of the Third Reich the Nazi regime used art as propaganda. Artists labored under strict regulatory standards, and many worked directly for the Propaganda Ministry. The majority of the Nazi effort was internal. It focused on the German people to reinforce the Hitler myth (image) and promote the Nazi ideology. The Propaganda Ministry mass produced



In this 1933 photograph of Hitler he wears his World War I Iron Cross First Class and wound badge (the equivalent of the U.S. Silver Star and a Purple Heart) on his Nazi Party uniform.

(Below) M/SGT Harold Maus of Scranton, PA is pictured with an Albrecht Dürer engraving, found among other art treasures at Merkers, Germany. 5/13/45.



"Bird in a
Guildded Cage"
The branch
insignia for some
MFAA Officers



European Civil
Affairs Division
SSI



(Left) General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, inspects art looted by the Germans and stored away in the Merkers salt mine in Central Germany. Behind GEN Eisenhower are General Omar N. Bradley (left), CG, 12th Army Group, and (right) LTG George S. Patton, Jr, CG, Third U.S. Army. 4/12/45.



(Above) German loot stored in a church at Ellingen, Germany was found by troops of the U.S. Third Army. 4/24/45.

"Monuments Men"

During WWII, some Civil Affairs personnel served in a specialty unit designated Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA). The majority of MFAA soldiers were recruited and assigned based on pre-war civilian occupations as art and history professors, museum curators and directors, artists, architects, and archivists. These unique specialists were to be responsible for finding and safeguarding art on the battlefield. After undergoing orientation training at the Civil Affairs and Military Government School, in Charlottesville, Virginia, the MFAA soldiers were shipped to the European Theater of Operations. At the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEP) the "Monuments Men" were assigned to the European Civil Affairs Division and charged with finding and safeguarding art throughout the theater. After Germany surrendered, the U.S. Army became the trustee for a huge quantity of captured art treasures that ranged from German art museum collections to Nazi-looted art taken from occupied Europe. The MFAA specialists focused on three categories of art: One group concentrated on artwork looted from individuals and governments throughout occupied Europe; a second group collected artwork and cultural items taken from synagogues and Jewish families during the Holocaust; the third focused on Nazi art. The MFAA specialists collected from June 1944 to 1950. Each collection group determined what was to be shipped to the United States. The unit deactivated in Germany in 1950, but the specialty remains in today's Civil Affairs units. All photos courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

This painting was reproduced on everything from matchbooks to postcards and distributed throughout Germany. A fearless Adolf Hitler, in the forefront of massed party members, is mantled by sunlight from the heavens. The dove descending on him connects him religiously to the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist. The caption reads "Es lebe Deutschland" (Germany Lives!). (The artist is K. Stauber).





This painting depicts a ceremony honoring the Nazi dead from the Beer Hall Putsch.



A bust of Hitler in the 82nd Airborne Division War Memorial Museum at Fort Bragg, NC, was shot full of holes by an unknown Allied soldier.

motivational posters and post cards until the German surrender on 8 May 1945.

During the 1945 Potsdam Conference the Allies agreed that all reminders of the Nazi regime, including artwork, would be removed from public view to hasten the denazification process in Germany.²⁰ In the American zone, artwork with Nazi symbols and military motifs were confiscated. This included state-owned and Nazi Party art that portrayed the leaders or symbolized Nazi ideology or doctrine. Between 1945 and 1950, the U.S. Army collected some 8,000 pieces of Nazi art and shipped them to the U.S. Army Center for Military History, for safekeeping in the Army Art Collection. Some of the art in that collection is temporarily displayed in U.S. Army military museums and offices around the country, including the Pentagon and in the major Army Command headquarters buildings. However, the majority is in storage. In late 1950 about 2,000 pieces of art were determined by the Department of the Army to be non-military and returned to the West German government. Over the next forty years more artwork was returned. Approximately 450 pieces of Nazi art remain in the U.S. Army Art Collection. Under German law, private individuals cannot own Nazi symbols,

Saddam Hussein's "Cult of Personality."



(Above) This mural from an airbase near Tikrit with everything from modern jet fighters to Muslim warriors shows "Saddam the Military Leader."



(Right) "Saddam the Arab Sheikh," was another popular image of the Iraqi dictator



(Above) This mural of "Saddam the Peacemaking Diplomat" was vandalized by American soldiers and Iraqis. (Photo courtesy of LTC Robert Lunke)

Adolf Hitler's Third Reich lasted for 12 years; Saddam Hussein had 24 years to build his own cult of personality in Iraq.¹ From July 1979 to March 2003 (Operation IRAQI FREEDOM) Saddam controlled every aspect of Iraqi life. He created the myth that he was the descendant of two of the most famous figures in Iraqi History; the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II and the Muslim warrior-king Saladin.²

The image of Saddam Hussein was omnipresent in Iraq. It was a constant reminder of how important he was. To further demonstrate his influence and constant presence Saddam had more than seventy elaborate palaces erected throughout the country. The psychological impact of his image and stance in paintings and statues was profound. They reminded the people that Saddam was always watching. In them he portrayed himself as a military leader, an Arab sheikh, a diplomat in business attire, and dressed like Saladin and Nebuchadnezzar. Always he was presented as a benevolent father figure.

In Operation IRAQI FREEDOM American soldiers saw Saddam's art everywhere. Irate Iraqis and Coalition soldiers vandalized most of the Saddam artwork. While much was destroyed, a few pieces were preserved for exhibition at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in Fayetteville, NC and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Museum at Fort Bragg, NC.

Endnotes

- 1 Adolf Hitler started developing his cult of personality before the Munich "Beer Hall" Putsch in November 1923. His publication of *Mein Kampf* helped his rise to popularity and power. Most historians consider the life of the Third Reich to be 12 years; from his assumption of power as the Chancellor in 1933 until the end of the war in 1945.
- 2 Eric H. Cline, "Saddam Hussein and History 101," BY GEORGE! Online, <http://www.gwu.edu/~bygeorge/030403/clinedit.html> accessed on 20 April 2008; Charles H. Briscoe, et al, *All Roads Lead to Baghdad. Army Special Operations Forces in Iraq* (Fort Bragg, NC: USASOC History Office), 16; This is a reference to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II of the sixth century BC, and the 12th century Moslem warrior-king Saladin, (who took Jerusalem from the crusaders). Neither of these two historical figures is Iraqi or Arab. Nebuchadnezzar II was Babylonian, and Saladin was Kurdish.

memorabilia, and art. However, state-supported museums and educational institutions in Germany may display Nazi items for educational purposes.²¹

The standard question is: “Why not destroy the artwork created to promote one of the most despicable regimes in history?” The Nazi art collection at the U.S. Army Center for Military History enables the viewers to gain the German perspective of World War II.²² Worldwide, dictators have used and continue to use, the Nazi model to promote cults of personality, using art as a propaganda tool. Fidel Castro and Che Guevara in Cuba, Kim Jong-il in North Korea, and Mao in China continue to be portrayed as national heroes.

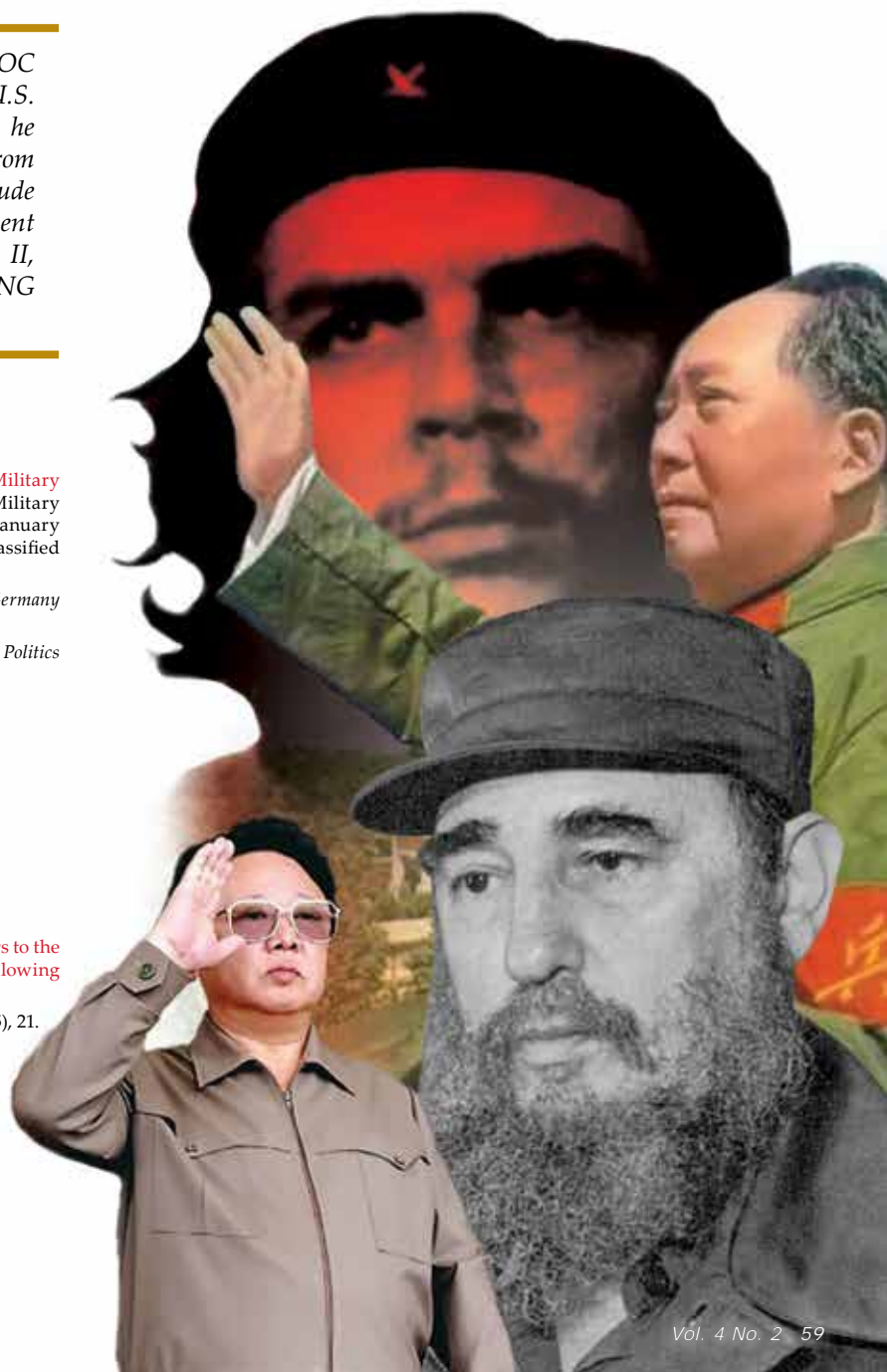
The author wishes to thank Ms. Renee Klish, Curator, the U.S. Army Center for Military History Art Collection for her assistance in researching this article and Master Sergeant (Ret.) Carlos Jaramillo, Jr. for the insignia on page 56.

Robert W. Jones Jr. is a historian assigned to the USASOC History Office and is a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army. A graduate of the University of Washington, he earned his M.A. from Duke University and his MS from Troy State University. Current research interests include Special Forces in Vietnam 1960–1966, military government and civil affairs, special operations in World War II, Operation JUST CAUSE, and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

Endnotes

- 1 The U.S. Army Art Collection is part of the U.S. Army Center for Military History; Renee Klish, Curator, Army Art Collection, the Center for Military History, interview by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones, Jr., 16 January 2008, Washington DC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), 31-32.
- 3 Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1987), 23.
- 4 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 42-43.
- 5 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 190.
- 6 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 190.
- 7 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 192.
- 8 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 192.
- 9 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 194.
- 10 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 190.
- 11 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 148, 196.
- 12 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 167, 201; **The First Reich refers to the unification of Germany; the Second Reich is the Weimar Republic following the First World War; therefore the Nazi Regime was the Third Reich.**
- 13 Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 21.
- 14 **The Reich Culture Chamber (Reichskulturkammer) was directly under the Propaganda Ministry in the chain of command. The Chamber had seven subchambers;** Toby Clark, *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 61
- 15 Jonathan Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 215.

- 16 *Gleichschaltung* literally means the “synchronization” or “coordination” (or “bringing into line”). This is the term by which the Nazi regime systematically established a totalitarian control system over the individual, and tight coordination over all aspects of society, ranging from everyday life to the economy, and to art. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 196-7; Clark, *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 61.
- 17 Adam, *Art of the Third Reich*, 15-16. Hitler, Party Day speech, 1935.
- 18 John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989), 33, 35; R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History*, second revised edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 1034.
- 19 Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda. The Art of Persuasion: World War II* (Leicester, United Kingdom: Magna Books, 1993), 25.
- 20 Renee Klish, Curator, Army Art Collection, the Center for Military History, interview by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones, Jr., 16 January 2008, Washington DC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Earl F. Ziemke, *The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany 1944-1946* (Washington DC: Center for Military History, 1990), 270.
- 21 Klish interview; Stratton Mammon, “Memoir of the Ranking Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Officer in the ETO in World War II,” *Military Affairs*, April 1988, 61.
- 22 Klish interview.





Snap Shot

by Earl J. Moniz

This article introduces our new Snap Shot logo and is the first of a three-part series producing panoramic still images.

The Snap Shot Logo

The Snap Shot logo connects digital imagery to the USASOC History Office. It was created using three elements: an image layer; a text layer; and an ID layer. The first layer is of black and white film that represents both still images (35 mm or larger format camera) and a film clip (16 mm or Super 8 video). These primary formats date to WWII. They form the majority of veteran collections.

The second layer includes the phrase "safety film" and the numeral "6." The label safety film means it is safe for everyone. Before it was made safe, it was a professional documentation tool.¹ The number 6 indicates the major elements in ARSOF upon which current operations still depend today. The ID layer, the full color logo of the USASOC History Office, is superimposed on the strip of film. It represents the computer-age digital aspect of our current efforts to document ARSOF photo history and preserve it for the future.

Panoramic Photography in Field Conditions

Now, here is a technique to help your unit better capture its history and in turn help us. Panoramic photography can be accomplished in the field. [Part 2 will discuss the assembly process. Part 3 will discuss the trickier aspects of dealing with the final panoramic composition.]

In the age of digital photography, the photographer normally has two options when documenting events/actions: 1 – the photographer can stand back far enough to include the entire scene in the view; or 2 – he can move closer to gather the details. The first eliminates the detail. The second sacrifices the surrounding view. A relatively unused option is the panoramic view.

Digital cameras can record images in a variety of formats. A few of these formats rival film quality. But

SSOFAS

The acronym **SSOFAS** provides a good reminder for these panoramic pictures. First, take all shots from the **Same Spot**. This factor is critical to later align all the images and assemble them into a larger image. The simple solution is a tripod. It must be level, for horizontal shots, or plumb, for vertical shots.

Second, **Overlap** the shots within reason. For larger expanses of sky or desert, the details are not necessarily that significant, so 10% overlaps will suffice. For detailed images, such as buildings with windows, crowds, or intricate landscapes with a variety of plant life, overlaps of 20-25% are better.

Third, keep the **Focus** constant. Turn off the auto-focus function. If the "keystone" of the panorama is expected to be the 5th or 6th of a 15-20 shot sequence, focus on the "keystone" first, then elevate or traverse to the initial position and begin shooting without changing the focus.

Fourth, keep the **Aperture** constant. Turn off the auto-exposure function. Again, frame the "keystone" image first, set the aperture setting for the desired exposure, and don't change it.

Finally, the **Sequence** of shooting really makes no difference. However, to simplify the panoramic assembly afterward, many professional photographers recommend a left to right, right to left, top to bottom, or bottom to top sequence.

Adopting **SSOFAS**: shoot from the **Same Spot**; determine the **Overlap**; keep the **Focus** constant; use the same **Aperture** setting; and determine a **Sequence**.

they have a price. High quality formats mean huge files that need a large storage device. Do not be discouraged.

Panoramic photography can accomplish both goals without huge files. In the old days, a stationary large format camera with film plates almost a foot square was carefully moved to capture sections of a panorama, or panoramic camera was used.² One can replicate large format panoramic techniques with digital cameras. Apply the photographic acronym: SSOFFAS (above inset).

A short explanation of the technique is required. The image plane of any camera (where the sensor sits to record the picture being taken) is normally directly above the threaded camera tripod hole.³ Stabilize the camera to



Tripod mount and threaded machine screw



Peanut butter and Ranger bar mount



Matchbook and toilet paper leveling



Plastic spoon leveling



Loose but steady grip on both the camera and the leveling materials

pivot at the tripod hole for panoramic photography. It's a simple technique.

Here's a field expedient way to position the camera. A short appropriately threaded machine screw is inserted to a point to balance the camera. The camera may then be pivoted on that screw while shooting. A pad or cushion can be used to hold it steadier. This method will provide the same angle for each shot, as long as the surface on which the camera is placed is flat. Perfectly level may not be feasible, but flat is sufficient.

Use the shutter release and concentrate on holding the camera steady. After all the shots are taken, move them to a computer for digital reassembly using photo editing software. SSOFAS will produce larger images with greater detail using smaller file size pictures. ⬆

Earl J. Moniz has been a digital information specialist with the USASOC History Office since 2001. After retiring as a Special Forces noncommissioned officer, he earned his M.L.S. from North Carolina Central University. Current projects include the USASOC History Office Kiosk Program, digital imagery for USASOC History Publications, and the cataloguing and organization of History Office imagery.

Endnotes

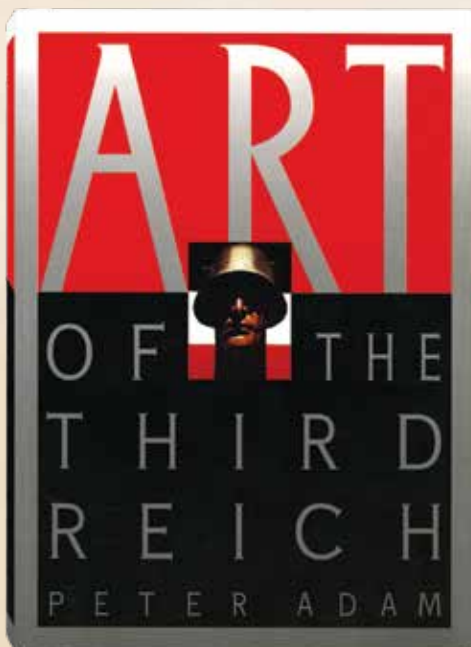
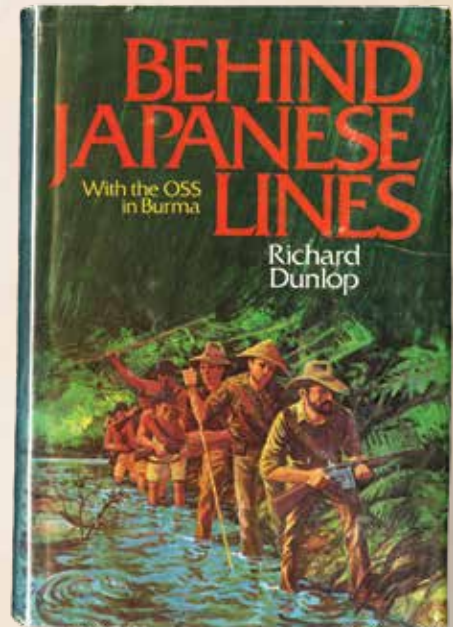
- 1 Original nitrate film was highly flammable. Beginning in 1909, a safer alternative was introduced and subsequently improved upon. Generally speaking, all the relatively nonflammable substitutes and alternatives for nitrate are called safety film.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safety_film accessed 26 MAY 2008; 1800 hours.
- 2 Some of the most famous early panoramas were assembled this way by George Barnard, a photographer for the Union Army in the American Civil War in the 1860s.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panoramic_photograph accessed 26 MAY 2008; 1900 hours.
- 3 A **film plane** is the area inside any camera where the individual frame of film or digital sensor is positioned during exposure.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_plane accessed 27 MAY 2008; 1400 hours.

Books in the Field

"Books in the Field" provides short descriptions of books related to subjects covered in the current issue of Veritas. Readers are encouraged to use these recommendations as a starting point for individual study on Army Special Operations history topics.

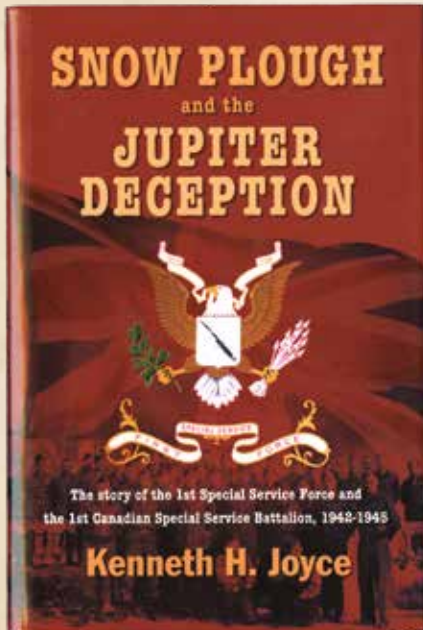
Richard Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines: With the OSS in Burma* (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1979)

Richard Dunlop served with OSS Detachment 101, and after the war, was a prolific free-lance writer whose works included *Donovan: America's Master Spy*. He wrote *Behind Japanese Lines* based on his wartime experiences and those of fellow veterans. At the time, the OSS records presently held at the National Archives II in College Park, MD, had not been released in their entirety. *Behind Japanese Lines* is not an individual memoir, but rather a narrative summary of Detachment 101's operations from 1942 to 1945. It provides a better overview of the unit than a more personal, narrower account, like Roger Hilsman's *American Guerrilla: My War Behind Japanese Lines*. Dunlop may have had access to some OSS documents, but he provides no citations and does not have a bibliography. Presented chronologically, *Behind Japanese Lines* is an engaging narrative of Detachment 101 operations. Although out of print, the book is still widely available in used bookstores and public libraries. Contains maps, photos, and an index.



Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995)

Art of the Third Reich is an extraordinary glimpse at how Nazi Germany used art as a propaganda tool. Beginning with the origins of the Nazi Party, author Peter Adam provides a detailed historical analysis to demonstrate how the successful manipulation of the masses was calculated by Adolf Hitler and his cohorts. The former BBC film producer has a unique perspective, having been raised in Nazi Berlin and being of Jewish origin. This book was compiled from his award-winning two-part documentary (also entitled "*Art of the Third Reich*"). Adam reviews Nazi art – from "*kitsch*" to paintings and statues designed to perpetuate the supremacy of the "Aryan race." The illustrations cover a broad spectrum of art, film, and architecture, which are useful in fully understanding the rapid rise of Adolf Hitler's Third Reich. Contains appendixes, endnotes, bibliography, index, and 321 illustrations (including 33 in color).

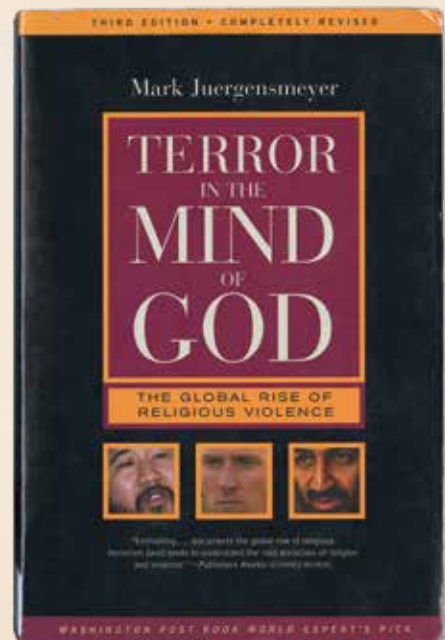


Kenneth H. Joyce, *Snow Plough and the Jupiter Deception: The Story of the 1st Special Service Force and the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion, 1942-1945* (St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2006)

Kenneth H. Joyce's *Snow Plough and the Jupiter Deception* is a very worthwhile addition to the lengthy list of books on the First Special Service Force (FSSF). Mr. Joyce, a Canadian, provides his nation's perspective on how this unique Canadian-American unit was formed, trained, and employed. SNOW PLOUGH, the operation to insert troops into Norway to destroy hydroelectric plants, and the Jupiter Deception, Winston Churchill's grand plan for diverting German resources from the Allied landings in North Africa, were the reason that the FSSF came into being. Mr. Joyce has done a very thorough job of researching the Canadian role in this unit. This book covers the earliest days of the war, including the formation and employment of Canadian airborne forces and follows the First Special Service Force (whose Canadian contingent is referred to as the 1st Special Service Battalion in the Canadian Army's order of battle) from its organization in Helena, Montana in August 1942 until the unit was disbanded in December 1944. This book is exhaustively researched and is one of the newest and certainly most complete histories of the FSSF. Contains photos, endnotes, bibliography, index and a listing of medals and awards earned by the Canadian members.

Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (3rd Edition, with a new preface), (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2003)

Terror in the Mind of God is a comparative study of religious terrorism. The author, Mark Juergensmeyer, is a Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies and the Director of the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He shows the linkage between religion and violence. To prove his point Juergensmeyer explains the social and cultural motives of religious terrorist organizations worldwide, supported by interviews to help readers understand the motivation of these groups. The book is split into two parts: first, he provides examples of religious terrorism within the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Buddhist traditions; then, he identifies those characteristics that enhance the likelihood that a religion will become violent. The central belief of all groups is that they are engaged in a battle between good and evil with every act sanctioned by God. Therefore, violence is morally justified and compromise is impossible. Rather than resembling an analytical scientific study, this work is interesting and easy to read. Contains notes, a list of interviews, an extensive 19-page bibliography, and an index.



Upcoming Articles...

The Battle of An-Najaf (28-29 January 2007): Part II

by Charles H. Briscoe

The intensity of combat will be ratcheted up several notches in Part II. TF Raptor and ODA 566, intent on expanding their search pattern for the downed AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, inadvertently chose a road that paralleled the long axis compound wall of the Cult of Heaven. That twelve-foot high berm with parapets and trenches below was fiercely defended by well-trained enemy fighters with a seemingly endless supply of ammunition for a variety of weapons. The intensity of fire "running that gauntlet" will be described by those Special Forces soldiers in the next issue of *Veritas*.



Alamo Scouts

by Kenneth Finlayson

The Southwest Pacific Area, under General Douglas A. MacArthur's command, liberated Japanese-controlled territory from New Guinea to the Philippines. To support this challenging mission, MacArthur's Sixth U.S. Army Commander, Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, needed a specially-trained group for reconnaissance and to conduct raids. Small, elite Alamo Scout teams were formed from soldiers trained at the Sixth Army Alamo Scout Training Center. One of their most renowned missions was the highly successful 30 February 1945 "Great Raid" to free Allied Prisoners of War held at Cabanatuan. Three Scout teams from this Special Forces legacy unit did critical reconnaissance and served as liaison between the 6th Ranger Battalion and the Filipino guerrillas during the rescue.

A Special Forces Model: OSS Detachment 101 in the Myitkyina Campaign, Part II

by Troy Sacquety

After Merrill's Marauders (5307th Composite Unit (Provisional)) captured the Myitkyina Airfield in Burma on 17 May 1944, the Chinese 150th Infantry Regiment failed to secure the city. This allowed the Japanese to bring in reinforcements, forcing an allied siege that lasted until 3 August 1944. This unplanned phase of the campaign fostered the employment of thousands of Kachin guerrillas in a model Unconventional Warfare (UW) campaign. The OSS guerrilla forces attacked Japanese supply lines into Myitkyina and ambushed reinforcing elements. OSS Detachment 101 helped to reduce the Japanese defense, and demonstrated how an effective UW element can serve as a force-multiplier for conventional units.



Commander, USASOC
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